

# **ORDINARY THINGS**

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## **an archaeology of public housing**

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**B.A. (Hons)**

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Social Sciences  
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2 NOVEMBER 2015

**Declaration of Originality**

This thesis does not contain any material that has been accepted for a degree of diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis. To the best of the candidate's knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

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The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

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## Publications

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During the research process I delivered five academic conference presentations based on my developing thesis (2011, 2012, 2014, 2015b, 2015c) and authored one journal article (2015a). I was the sole author of each of these, but I acknowledge the suggestions of the peer reviewers of the journal article and the comments received from members of the audience at each of the conference presentations, all of which provided me with much good guidance about how to develop and carry forward my ideas.

### Articles

Flanagan, K 2015a, 'A genealogy of public housing production: practice, knowledge and the broadacre housing estate', *Housing, Theory and Society*, vol. 32, no. 4, pp. 407-428.

### Conference presentations

Flanagan, K 2011, 'Hostility towards public housing: where it comes from and what it means', paper delivered to Asia Pacific Network for Housing Research Conference, Hong Kong, 8-10 December.

Flanagan, K 2012, 'Public housing policy through an historical lens: the growth of hostility towards public housing', paper delivered to Australasian Housing Researchers' Conference, Adelaide, 8-10 February.

Flanagan, K 2014, 'A misguided decision from a less-enlightened past: the history of public housing estates in Tasmania', paper delivered to the Australian Welfare History Workshop, Hobart, 10-11 February.

Flanagan, K 2015b, 'How to house the hard to house: the discourse of the "problem tenant" in Tasmanian housing policy', paper delivered to Australasian Housing Researchers' Conference, Hobart, 18-20 February.

Flanagan, K 2015c, 'Why change? Problematising normative understandings of innovation in housing policy', paper delivered to Housing Theory Symposium, Melbourne, 1-2 June.

## Abstract

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This thesis identifies and describes a major discursive discontinuity in public housing policy in Tasmania, Australia. It contributes to literature on the formation, practice and consequences of public housing policy in Australia. The consensus in this literature is that, in the 1970s, emerging neoliberal modes of practice shaped a series of policy reforms which have produced significant problems with the sustainability, effectiveness and reputation of public housing. My findings challenge this analysis.

From the mid-1940s, state housing authorities built large housing estates so as to enable home ownership by working class families. More recently, policy-makers have pursued reforms reducing public housing to a remnant of semi-crisis provision for people with complex needs while simultaneously fostering capacity, supply and innovation through community housing. These reforms are associated with growing, generalised hostility towards public housing. In this thesis, I ask how this hostility has been able to emerge and evolve.

I have addressed this question by applying Foucauldian ‘archaeology’ to the archive of the Tasmanian Housing Department. This approach reconceptualises historical ‘facts’ as raw material organised according to systems of discursive ‘rules’ into formations that produce knowledge. I found that the difference between past and present knowledge about public housing in Tasmania is the manifestation of a significant discontinuity, tentatively dated to the late 1970s and early 1980s and constituted by six significant shifts in discursive practice. The resulting re-ordering of discursive material has produced the knowledge that public housing is a form of welfare directed at dysfunctional subjects.

I argue that this discontinuity was produced, not by ‘neoliberalism’, but by a more fundamental reconfiguration in the order of discourse, one which replaced a system of discursive organisation in which subjects are constituted according to their material surroundings with one in which everything is ordered in relation to the individual. My findings problematise the relationship between current policy and neoliberalism by demonstrating the complexity of the discursive field perpetuating it. I have contributed both an original account of localised policy change with resonance for the wider Australian housing system and a worked example of how archaeology can explicate the discursive scaffolding of what we know about the world we live in.

## Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank so many people. Prof. Keith Jacobs and Dr Michelle Gabriel were generous, kind and thoughtful supervisors and I am so fortunate to have had them to guide me. Dr Julia Verdouw and Assoc. Prof. Daphne Habibis, my current colleagues on a collection of projects, were unfailingly supportive in their insistence, even in the face of major project deadlines, that my thesis came first. Dr Felicity Picken helped me to stop being afraid of Foucault, and Dr Kate Booth's methodology course was a revelation. Dr Pip Watson has been steadfast in her support, especially in these last few months. Officemates past — especially Brendan Churchill, Dr (hurrah!) John Cianchi, and Tristan Ferguson — kept me company on the long and winding road.

I am indebted to the University of Tasmania and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute for additional scholarship support, and to the latter, also for the experience of being welcome within a stimulating and supportive housing research community. I am so grateful to all those who attended various conferences, sat through my presentations, and provided such good advice, considered suggestions and warm encouragement. And the patient professionals at the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, who hauled out file after file after file on my behalf, were my secret weapon.

Without the encouragement and belief of people at Anglicare Tasmania, especially Rev. Dr Chris Jones, Jo Flanagan, and Margie Law, Teresa Hinton, Ann Hughes and Bronwen Hayes, I would not be a housing researcher and I would not have had this incredible opportunity. My Honours supervisor, Dr Margaret Lindley, encouraged me in 2001 to undertake a PhD, understood when I decided it was not the time, and responded warmly to a request for a reference when I finally decided to take the plunge.

My family, especially my parents, Pat and Jurate, propped me up in all sorts of ways when I needed it. My father-in-law, Rod Quarrell, translated obscure bits of building jargon for me. My grandparents, Nina and Aleksandras Kantvilas and Arch and Helen Flanagan have always loved me and been proud of me — thank you Būte, and Senelis, Archie and Mama, I miss you so much.

I value my friendship with Jill Brown more deeply than I can say.

Finally, to my beloved Adam: from beginning to end, I couldn't have done it without you. And to Alison Clare Flanagan Quarrell, who arrived in the middle: my distraction and delight, and the only reason I will ever need for doing anything worthwhile.

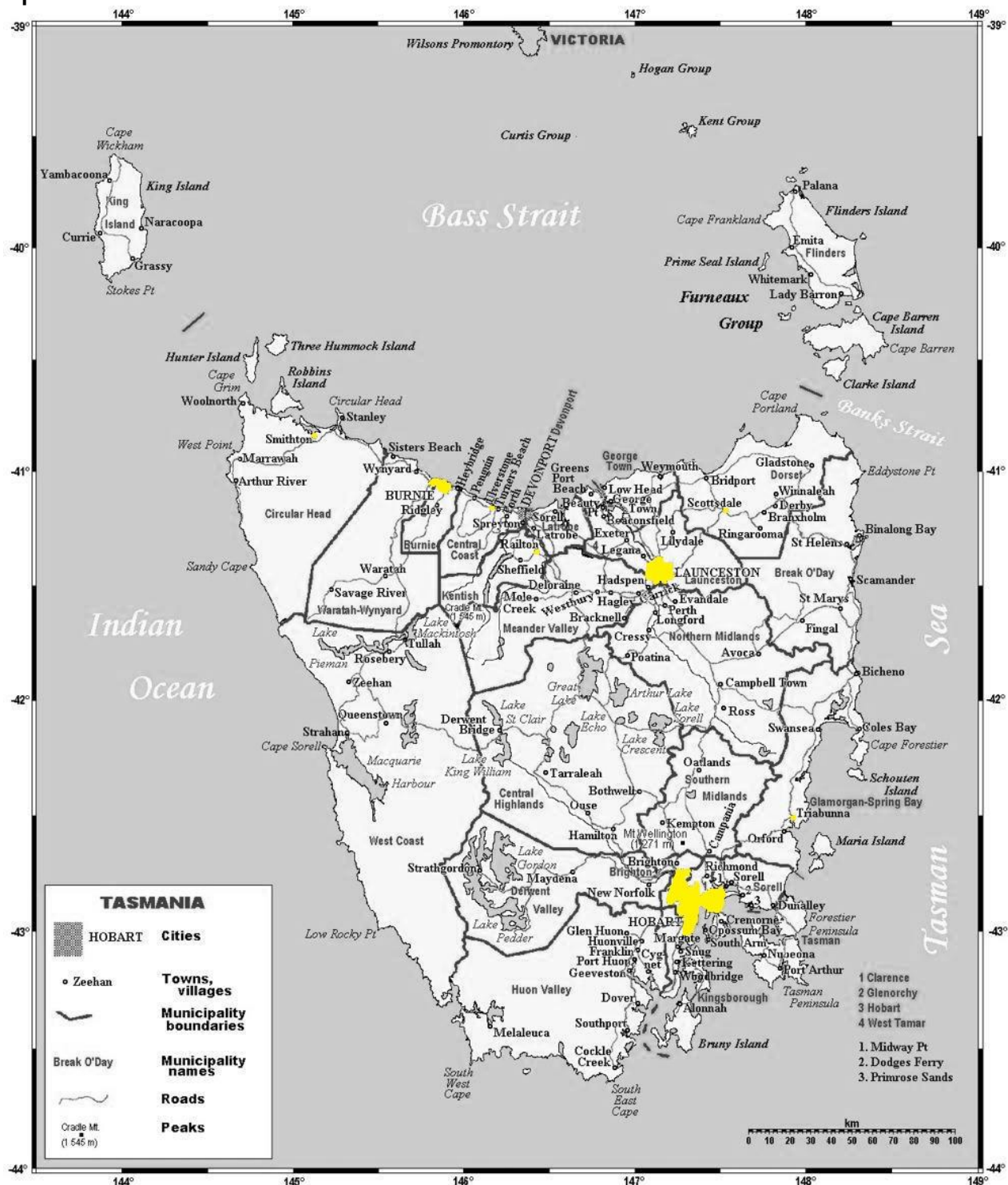
## Ordinary things

A tendency does exist today to rubbish ordinary things, simply because they are conventional. Boxes built out of ticky tacky are not necessarily bad. Certainly not necessarily all bad. I don't subscribe to the theory that, in order for housing to be good, it must be different. A ticky tacky box on a beautiful block of land in Hobart could be just as pleasant a place to live as a mansion in a polluted city area.

*Leslie Allwinton  
Tasmanian Director of Housing, 1968-1975  
[in Housing Department (1972)]*

# A guide to Tasmanian locations mentioned in the thesis

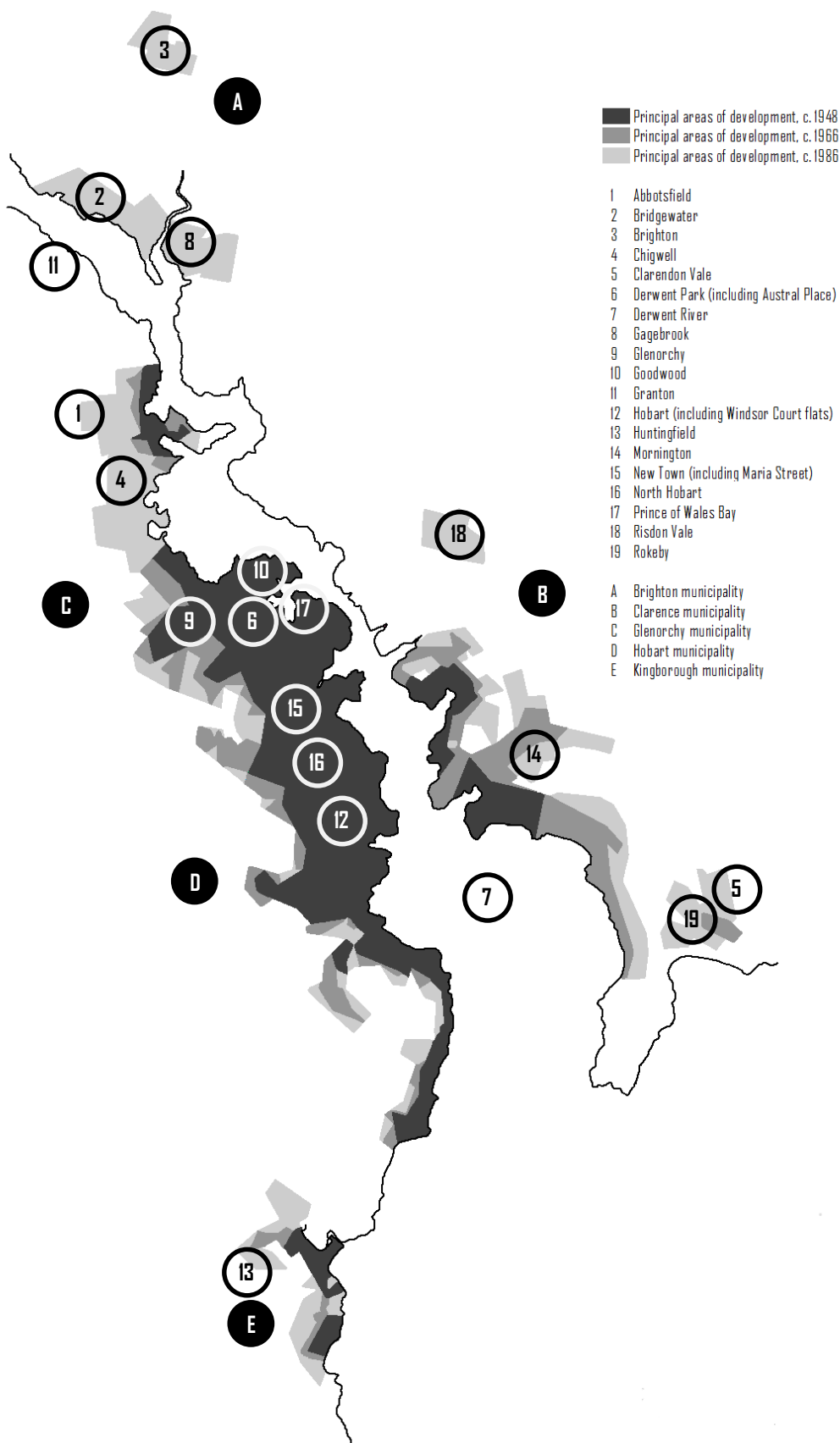
Map 1: Tasmania



**Note:** Locations mentioned in this thesis are highlighted in yellow: Burnie (including Somerset); Hobart (for detail, see Map 2 below); Launceston (including Newnham and Ravenswood); Railton; Scottsdale; Smithton; Triabunna and Ulverstone (including West Ulverstone).

Original map reproduced from <<http://www.globalcitymap.com/australia/tasmania-map.html>>.

Map 2: Changes in the development of the Hobart metropolitan area, 1948-1986



Map drawn by the author based on maps in Department of Lands and Surveys (1948, map no. 1; 1966, p. 13); Davies Bros. Ltd (1986, map index).



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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## Preface: 'the system is broken'

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In 2006, I commenced work as a research and policy officer for a large community services organisation in the state of Tasmania, Australia. As well as delivering services, the organisation supported a research and advocacy centre. The centre's areas of interest spanned poverty and hardship, employment policy, access to essential services, mental health and disability and problem gambling, and my position could have included coverage of any of these, but the next research project on the to-do list was housing-related and I was the first available researcher who could be assigned to it. Thus began my housing policy career.

It so happened that these years coincided with substantive reform to the Australian public housing system. Momentum had been building for some time, but the election of the Rudd Government in 2007, the global financial crisis and a range of state-based political pressures meant that housing became, for a short period, a high profile issue in social policy.

The organisation I worked for provided a significant number of services for people who were homeless or at risk of homelessness and a range of specialist services for people with mental health issues, disabilities and other 'complex' needs. Many of these people had such fragmented tenancy histories that the existing public housing system, the landlord of last resort, was in effect the only resort. But despite the suite of new initiatives being advanced at the state and federal levels, support for public housing was minimal. If there was a future for 'social' housing, it was believed to lie with community housing associations, not the government. Increasingly then, the focus of my position became directed towards the defence of public housing. My impact was unimpressive. Despite the plethora of new and well-funded initiatives, there was simply no appetite within Government — and very little appetite within the wider community sector — for further investment into what was considered to be a failed and broken system.

# The research question

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## The research problem

In 2011, I started this PhD. My research problem, not yet formulated into a question, was to explore why it was that so many people who purportedly supported the public housing system had stopped believing in it. I was aware that, floating in the discursive ether, was another public housing system, public housing as it was then, as opposed to as it is now. In a landmark speech in 2009, the new national Housing Minister, Tanya Plibersek (2009, pp. 1-2)<sup>1</sup>, talked about how public housing had once been ‘a spring board allowing people to land softly and then jump out of disadvantage’, offering ‘a stable environment [that] allowed people to take up work, build assets and set their families on a path to self sufficiency’. Her characterisation of public housing in the present day, however, focussed on drug use, violence, fear, joblessness, dislocation, entrenched social isolation and reliance on welfare, and she blamed these problems on failing stock, ‘too much’ of it concentrated in broadacre housing estates, and the lack of transparency, accountability and competition caused by the monopoly provision of social housing by state housing authorities. One of the subheadings in her speech encapsulated the message clearly: ‘Tenants have new needs but our systems are old’ (p. 2).

The speech was a landmark because it was the first detailed public articulation of the reforms being undertaken by the new Government, not because its contents ran counter to the established policy trend. The solutions Plibersek was presenting — stock transfer to entrepreneurial community housing organisations to provide them with the leverage necessary to raise funds to build more stock and to provide public housing authorities with the competition necessary to drive them to improve their services, and the redevelopment of existing broadacre housing estates to create ‘mixed’ communities — were consistent with the direction already being taken in a number of states. Plibersek’s reference to the golden age of public housing, built for working families to provide a ‘springboard’ out of disadvantage, was also unremarkable. Public housing past is as much an object of contemporary public housing discourse as public housing present. That object of public housing past suggested a time when public housing was valued and supported, and clearly there was a basis to this, because the material consequences of that support — public housing developments representing millions, if not billions, of dollars of investment — were highly visible. But something had changed, and now those developments were seen as liabilities, not assets.

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the large number of cumbersome archival references in this thesis I have adopted the following referencing convention for the in-text citations. If the immediately preceding reference in the same paragraph is by the same author (individual or organisational), I have omitted their name from the citation. If the immediately preceding reference is the same source, I have omitted both author and year. Thus, ... (Housing Department 1968a, p. 1) ... (1969a, p. 2) ... (p. 7). Internal cross-references are distinguished by the additional use of ‘above/below’.

Through my PhD, I wanted to understand the despair (at best) and contempt (at worst) that greeted calls for funding for public housing in the here and now to be increased. I wanted to understand why many people who would ordinarily defend such a system — because they used it, or their clients needed it, or because they worked for it — were complicit in the policies that were further undermining it. I wanted to understand why support for public housing had become so unsayable. From this, then, came my research question:

### **How did the current hostility towards public housing emerge and evolve?**

#### **Methodological approach**

To answer this question, I have adopted an explicitly Foucauldian framework. The way in which I am interpreting and applying the work of Foucault is discussed at length in Chapter 2, along with my rationale for pursuing such an approach over other forms of discourse analysis. But in brief, my reasons for selecting Foucault are as follows. First, my research question requires finding a way to unpick the ‘taken-for-granted’ of housing policy. I want to explore why certain perspectives are no longer given credence in the policy discourse. This focus on why some things are ‘sayable’ and others not lends itself to a Foucauldian interpretation. Secondly, my research question incorporates a historical dimension. I want to trace shifts in the way people thought and think about public housing over time. Again, a Foucauldian approach, which looks at the production of knowledge within its historical context, is suitable for this task.

I have used Foucault’s (1991 [1968], 1998 [1968], 1981 [1970], 1977 [1971], 2002 [1972], 1991 [1978], 1991 [1980]; Bellour & Foucault 1998 [1967]; Florence 1998 [c. 1980]; Foucault & Miskowiec 1986 [1984]) ideas to articulate a particular way of seeing public housing history. I treat that history as discourse, as a dispersion of raw material which can be and is assembled according to different ordering systems. These systems are not random, but regular and orderly, and the way in which different elements are related to each other by them determines how we see the raw material of discourse — and what we are able, given what is available to us, to know about it. Discourse is therefore relational — it is formed out of the relationships between its constituent components and each discursive formation exists in relation to others and to the non-discursive field. The study of changes in discourse is a study of the ways in which the form of discourses, their contents and their relations to each other can be and are reconfigured at certain points in time, and of the effect that this has on the production of knowledge.

The references listed above are not the usual selection. Foucault's later works, most particularly *Discipline and Punish* (1997) and his lecture on governmentality (1991 [1978]) are more popular choices amongst scholars in housing and related fields concerned with similar topics to those discussed in this thesis (see, for example, Flint 2002; Lippert 2014; McKee 2008; Raco 2003). My choice of this earlier material locates my work in relation to Foucault's archaeological studies rather than his genealogical studies. The conventional shorthand used to differentiate between these two broad analytical approaches is that genealogy takes archaeology and 'adds power' (for example, Fairclough 1992, p. 49). However, O'Farrell's (2005, p. 69) interpretation is more useful in this context — that archaeology and genealogy are of the same substance (despite differences in terminology), but the 'point of attack' is different: 'archaeology is about the "conditions of possibility" which give rise to knowledge, whereas genealogy is about the "constraints" that limit the orders of knowledge'. There are elements of both approaches in this thesis, but because my main focus is on the production of knowledge rather than on the promulgation and (re)direction of that knowledge, I have characterised it as an 'archaeology' of public housing.

## **Tasmania**

The empirical focus of this thesis is on Tasmania, one of the six states and two territories which make up the federated Commonwealth of Australia. It is the only island state, with less than 1% of Australia's land mass and in the period discussed in this thesis, less than 3% of the population (Matheson 1999, pp. 27, 94). Since Federation in 1901, principal revenue raising powers in Australia have progressively accrued to the Commonwealth while the responsibility for the bulk of government service provision has remained with the states, a situation known as 'vertical fiscal imbalance'. This means that at a State Government level, the provision of services like health, education and housing depends in large part upon the Commonwealth providing the funding. (A third tier of government, local government, is responsible for matters such as the provision of water and sewerage infrastructure and most suburban roads, public health and planning, and raises rates from property-owners to contribute to the cost of operating these services). The distribution of Commonwealth funding amongst the states is based on the recommendations of the Commonwealth Grants Commission, in order to make sure 'that each State or Territory is able to function, by reasonable effort, at a standard not lower than the average standard of other States or Territories', given differences in expenditure required (due to demography, for example) and revenue-raising capacity (p. 86). Under this system, Tasmania has always functioned as a 'claimant' state, which means it has, due to its fiscal disadvantage, received proportionally more funding that it would otherwise have obtained (see Matheson 1999, pp. 41-57, 77-92 for further information).



The Australian parliamentary system is Westminster-derived, and the two main parties are the Australian Labor Party on the left and the Liberal Party on the right. In Tasmania from 1934 to 1982, excepting a short period in opposition between 1969 and 1972, Labor was in power, although this does not imply radicalism — Tasmanian Labor governments have generally ‘eschewed ideology in favour of developmental pragmatism’ (Davis 2005, p. 204). When in power at the national level the Liberal Party governs in a formal Coalition with the Country Party (now called the National Party), but in Tasmania, the latter has little to no electoral influence, and the Liberal Party has been able to form government in its own right.

## **The ‘taken for granted’: public housing, present and past**

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### **The effect of neoliberalism on the practice of public housing policy**

In this thesis, I make frequent reference to the ‘taken for granted’ of Australian public housing policy and in this section I seek to clarify precisely what I mean by that. First, there is the ‘taken for granted’ which applies to the contemporary condition of the system and the likely outcomes of this condition. Secondly, discussed further below, there is the ‘taken for granted’ of public housing history.

The ‘taken for granted’ view of public housing present is, as encapsulated in the preface of this chapter, that ‘the system is broken’. There is less agreement in the literature that the solution to that breakage lies within the community housing sector and estate redevelopment,<sup>2</sup> but it is not in dispute that this is the direction that things have been moving in for some time. More precisely, the scholarly literature has identified a number of progressive changes in Australian housing policy since the 1970s. These include a shift from supply side to demand side responses (Caulfield 2000; Dodson 2006; Yates 2013); the extension of paternalistic and coercive interventions to manage tenant populations (Schindeler 2007; Jacobs 2008; Bullen 2010); managerialist reform of housing bureaucracies (Hayward 1996; Caulfield 2000; Burke 2004; Marston 2004a; Dalton 2009; Chalkley 2012); an increased emphasis on targeting assistance to ‘need’ (Hayward 1996; Caulfield 2000; Dodson 2006; Francis-Brophy & Donoghue 2013); and an official ‘retreat’ of the state, through funding cuts and the contracting out of housing services, coupled with an extension of governmental power via regulatory mechanisms and a rhetorical valorisation of ‘community’ (Darcy 1999; Caulfield 2000; Darcy & Manzi 2004; Dodson 2006; Bullen 2010; Francis-Brophy & Donoghue 2013; Yates 2013). These changes have produced an inadequate and residualised system occupied by highly disadvantaged tenants concentrated into particular locations (Chalkley 2012; Francis-Brophy & Donoghue 2013;

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<sup>2</sup> One of the policy papers I produced when working as a research and policy officer (see Flanagan 2008) provides a literature review on the growth provider model as it was then being put forward, and effectively outlines the case against these reforms as the ‘silver bullet’ solution for Australian public housing.

Yates 2013); falling rental revenues (Hayward 1996; Hall & Berry 2007a, 2007b; Yates 2013); and a marked preference within housing authorities for alternatives to public housing, such as community housing associations or vehicles which leverage private investment into ‘affordable’ housing (Randolph 1993; Francis-Brophy & Donoghue 2013; Yates 2013). Chalkley (2012, pp. 11-15) has broadly characterised the recent history of Australian public housing as ‘public housing’ becoming ‘welfare housing’. Little of this is unique to Australia — a similar pattern has been progressively outlined in the UK by Clapham (1997), Walker (2000), Flint (2002), McDermont (2004), McKee and Cooper (2008) and McKee (2011) among others.

Most accounts of these changes and their consequences attribute some or all of the causation to the emergence, expansion and continued influence of neoliberalism. The theoretical antecedent of neoliberal economics is neoclassical economics, which emerged in the second half of the 19th century, building on the 18th century work of the classical economist Adam Smith. From the 1940s, these ideas were promulgated by a ‘small and exclusive group of passionate advocates’ clustered around Friedrich Hayek (Harvey 2005, pp. 19-21).

Neoliberalism is a complex strand of economic theory and practice, but at its core lies a desire to reduce the role and size of government and the private sector as much as possible in favour of allowing the free market to determine the distribution of goods and services (Berry 2014, p. 2). This is achieved through deregulation, privatisation and the dismantling of the social safety net. Quiggin (2005, pp. 31-32, 36) has pointed out that some of the extremes of neoliberal thinking are modified by its pragmatic and political need to ‘compete’ with social democracy, and this means that a limited social safety net remains, while, ‘despite dominating the policy process for 20 years, economic liberals mostly failed to reduce the relative size of the public sector’. The pragmatic neoliberal agenda, as opposed to the ideal one, is to scale back government involvement in ‘non-core’ activities and minimise its involvement in ‘core’ activities (such as health, education and income support), to limit regulatory constraints on economic activity and to limit the redistribution of income to the provision of a small and targeted social ‘safety net’.

The literature both within and outside Australia suggests that the economic crisis of the mid-1970s created a space within which neoliberalism became institutionally embedded as the dominant decision-making paradigm in many countries (see, for example, Wolch 1990, p. 38; Hobsbawm 1994, p. 409; McDonald & Marston 2002, p. 380; Harvey 2005, p. 22; Archer, V 2009, pp. 179-184; Dalton 2009, pp. 72-73). In Australia, as in other countries (Levitas 2005), both sides of politics were attracted to the new agenda (Archer, V 2010, pp. 30-31). Although neoliberal economics was most enthusiastically embraced and rolled out (as ‘economic rationalism’) by the Hawke Labor Government, which came to power in March 1983 (see Pusey 1991), the influence of neoliberalism was visible much earlier, as the work of Verity Archer (2009, 2010) has demonstrated. Quiggin (2005, p. 26) identifies Milton

Friedman's 1976 tour of Australia as the turning point: 'from this point on, economic liberalism [i.e. neoliberalism] was the dominant position in both microeconomic and macroeconomic policy debates'.

Within the literature drawing explicitly on Foucault, neoliberalism has primarily been examined as a mode of governmentality which extends beyond the purely economic — that is, as the application of expert knowledge of all kinds to the government of populations (Bevir 2013, pp. 158-159; Li 2014, pp. 35-37). Foucauldian accounts identify the development of successive rationalities of government — from monarchical sovereignty to liberalism to the welfare state and finally, to neoliberalism — as the playing out of a process of critique and reinvention (see Bevir 2013, p. 158; Brady 2014, pp. 19-21; Clarke 2009, p. 230; Stenson 1998, pp. 338-340). As one mode of normalising and governing subjects produced problems, the practices, techniques and knowledges that constituted it were reconfigured in different ways in order to overcome those problems. Thus, in the face of the dislocation and disorder produced by laissez-faire industrial capitalism, liberalism developed a series of 'social' technologies which became configured as the welfare state (although they are not exclusive to it) — the state provision of essential public infrastructure, the production of self-reliant subjects, the provision of collective insurance against social risk, programs of modification for those deemed socially incompetent, and the creation of a public sphere which included the provision of welfare-related services, including public housing (Stenson 1998, pp. 342-343). Neoliberalism in its turn emerged as a form of critique of these forms of social government, as a historically-situated means of problematising and grappling with the welfare state (Brady 2014, p. 28).

Clarke (2007, p. 974) identifies 'the subordination of the social' as the central idea of most accounts of neoliberalism, an idea which positions neoliberalism as a form of 'anti-social' change, directed at the imposition of 'the economic' as distinct from 'the social'. Yet, as Clarke shows, the multiplicity of meanings inherent in the word 'subordination' that can be discerned in the literature (he counts nine: erasure, privatisation, subjugation, domestication, narrowing, functionalisation, economisation, fiscalisation and reinvention) point to its lack of precision, and to the need for modes of explanation that explain not just the dominance of neoliberal forms of contemporary governmentality, but the persistent survival of modes of 'social' governmentality, and the emergence of new forms of 'the social', such as the global environmentalist movement (pp. 975-978, 980-984). Responding to this challenge within the Foucauldian literature, growing number of scholars have sought to problematise what is meant by 'neoliberal governmentality', particularly to address a perceived lack of 'nuanced descriptive investigation' (Brady 2014, p. 12). As Lippert (2014, pp. 51-52) points out, as soon as neoliberal governmentality is placed under the microscope of a sustained, situated

empirical analysis in a specific place at a specific point in time, its ubiquity and universality comes under challenge, begging the question of ‘what else’ might be present.

Revisionist approaches conceptualise neoliberal governmentality in terms of ‘assemblages’, as collections of knowledge, power, rationalities, subjectivities, objects, and technologies, the relations between which are constantly being renegotiated; these assemblages are contextually specific to a time and place and, importantly, contestable (Brady 2014, pp. 31-32; Li 2014, p. 37; Lippert 2014, p. 52). Gupta and Sharma (2006), for example, emphasise this specificity by showing how analyses of neoliberal governmentality which normalise western experiences are inapplicable and inexplicable in the Indian context. There, governmental assemblages which in other places have proceeded sequentially are propagated differently and problematically, in ways that can only be explained if cultural and political components of the assemblage are incorporated into the analysis. The neoliberalism revealed by their research, like the assemblages identified by studies focussed on other instances of allegedly purely neoliberal governance (see, for example, Flint 2002; Li 2014; Lippert 2014; Raco 2003), is an assemblage that incorporates both neoliberal and non-neoliberal elements.

Clarke (2007, 2008), though not a Foucauldian, draws upon elements of Foucauldian approaches in his discussion of neoliberalism as a concept. He points out that many analyses that have tried to grapple with contextual variation have focussed on the ‘insertion’ of neoliberalism into different contexts, but suggests a different way of looking at the problem — as one of ‘different modes of insertion into “global” neo-liberalism’ (2008, p. 137). This highlights the composite nature of neoliberalism — as a mobile, selective assemblage, it incorporates techniques and practices which have displaced other governmental modes, but it also co-exists with alternative, situated rationalities through complex processes of subordination and appropriation (p. 138). The political and governmental work of neoliberalism is found in ‘its articulation, disarticulation and rearticulation of practices’; it is a constantly shifting and adapting entity, but it is also given form and coherency by a consistent set of elements, comprising ‘a logic of market rationality, a conception of personhood (centered [sic] on, but not exclusive to, human individuals), a calculating framework of efficiency, and a view of authority as a fundamental political and social bond’ (pp. 138, 141). These elements combine to create a particular practice of ordering and governing, and the fact that intersections with other discourses can involve any one of them and still be meaningful explains neoliberalism’s capacity to find spaces for ‘cohabitation’ with other rationalities. When neoliberalism is thought of in this way, as a negotiated, mediated, mobile assemblage, its omnipotent and omnipresent qualities (pp. 137-139) are stripped of their totalising power.

## **The historical orthodoxy of public housing policy**

According to Batten (1999, p. 144), a claim has shifted from being an argument to being an orthodoxy once the original instance no longer needs to be referenced. There are many aspects of housing policy in Australia (and elsewhere) that have attained the status of 'orthodoxy'. To take just one example, few researchers would feel the need to provide a citation for a passing reference to the claim that when public housing was first constructed in the post-war period, it was originally intended to accommodate working-class families. The orthodox view goes beyond casual references to isolated 'facts', however. What follows is my assessment, based on observation throughout my time as a housing policy analyst and researcher in the non-government sector, as a PhD student familiar with the academic literature, and as a consumer of mainstream media, of the 'taken for granted' of Australian public housing policy (see, as just one example of such an account, Lewis (1999)).

The narrative proceeds in the following manner. In the first half of the twentieth century, a lack of alternatives forced many low income earners to live in poorly regulated and substandard private rental properties in the inner cities. The public housing system was a response to this. Although many states had implemented some form of government housing program earlier than 1945, the public housing system 'proper' started with funding made available under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement (CSHA). In the post-war period, population growth due to the baby boom and high levels of immigration led to high demand for housing and so the state housing authorities developed large construction divisions. The focus for state housing authorities at this time was on providing homes, preferably on a home ownership basis, for the working class. Good economic times provided a supportive backdrop for this housing program. In the 1970s, however, the tenant profile started to change: there were fewer wage earners, more social security recipients and more people with special needs applying for assistance. State housing authorities started to respond to these changes by diversifying the type of housing they built and the locations they built in. In the 1980s, the Commonwealth Government started to exert control over state housing policy via special purpose funding programs (meaning that it only provided the funding on the condition that it be used for a tightly specified purpose). Housing assistance was reoriented towards meeting the needs of 'customers' and housing authorities moved away from construction of new dwellings to concentrate on redeveloping existing homes and estates in order to improve amenity for tenants.

The conventional analysis that arises from this, along the lines of the views put by Plibersek (2009) and discussed above, is that, although public housing was originally designed for working families, now that most of its tenants are dependent upon welfare support, the purpose and focus of the system has had to change and the operating model no longer works

effectively. The home ownership emphasis of earlier state housing policy is considered unfortunate because it took the focus away from providing for people who were most in need of assistance and it has created the undersupply and poor geographical distribution of public housing stock that housing authorities must deal with today. The decision to build the majority of public housing in broadacre developments (or, in some places, in high-rise towers) was a mistake and state housing authorities should have retreated from this policy much earlier than they did.

This analysis produces two coherent explanations, one which tends to be articulated within the policy community and one which is more favoured by academics. For policy makers, the lesson to be learned is that the original operating model on which public housing was based was suited to strong economic conditions and high levels of employment, but buckled under pressure after the radical change in the client group which took place in the 1970s. Public housing is now no longer fit for purpose, and the failure to recognise this earlier and to respond in a timely way to social and economic changes means that many of the problems facing the system have been made much worse than they otherwise would be. The second, more abstract explanation aligns public housing with Keynesian economics, conceptualising it as a major government investment in the social wage. The financial crisis of the 1970s rendered this approach economically and ideologically unviable, and the rise of neoliberalism led to a change in government policy. Governments stopped supporting public housing, hollowed out its funding and targeted it increasingly to those considered most in need. It is these changes that have produced the residualised system we have today.

In presenting this narrative and its associated interpretations, I do not intend to imply that everyone (else) accepts them blindly and uncritically, because that is simply not true. There is critique aplenty, and dissent, debate and disagreement. But what the account above does have is the status of ‘common sense’ in housing policy circles — essentially, to use Batten’s rule of thumb, it would not need to be referenced, but any deviation from it would be. I also do not intend to imply that the ‘taken for granted’ account is necessarily wrong. That it has attained such a hold within the discourse suggests that the informed majority finds it a credible explanation for the empirical phenomena it describes.

In this thesis, I am not as interested in proving the orthodox version incorrect as I am in exploring how it has been produced, sustained and used over time and in why that particular explanation is a credible one in the here and now. In making my case, I argue that there has always been a complex set of discursive relations underpinning public housing policy. Much of the material that informs the ‘taken for granted’ has, as I show in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, always existed — funding restrictions, a degree of ambivalence within government about the size and

cost of the program, a disadvantaged client group, concerns about the broadacre model of production — but this material was discursively configured in a different way to produce different knowledge about public housing and public housing policy, knowledge which allowed the provision of public housing to be sustained and supported. My argument in this thesis is that the discursive relations which produced this knowledge were reconfigured over the 1970s and early 1980s by a discursive shift which we might, for convenience, label ‘neoliberalism’, and this altered the way in which the substance of funding arrangements, client characteristics and government attitudes were assembled in discourse to produce knowledge (truth) about public housing. The reassembly of these elements also produced different knowledge about the past of public housing, and some of the discursive strength of the new knowledge comes from the way it uses the past as an object.

My approach in this thesis is to take three critical aspects of this reconfiguration — the changes in the client group, the home ownership question and the production of housing — and to examine, through close analysis of the archival evidence that pertains to them the discursive relations which underpin what people ‘knew’ about them then and now. I then use this knowledge to unpick the ‘past’ of public housing that is incorporated into contemporary knowledge about public housing. In doing so, I aim to problematise current policy knowledge, and demonstrate that it is not inevitable ‘truth’, but just one way of seeing.

## **The research findings**

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### **An overview of the thesis**

My thesis begins with this introduction. Here I have explained the origins of the research in my own experience as a researcher, policy analyst and advocate in Tasmania, and the way in which the questions with which this experience left me have evolved into my PhD research question: ‘How did the current hostility towards public housing emerge and evolve?’ I have also provided an overview of the broader context against which my own more specific archival research can be read — the story of the post-war housing program and the contemporary policy landscape, as well as a brief outline of the bodies of literature to which this thesis contributes. In this section of the Introduction, I provide an outline of the rest of the thesis, summarising my key findings and the thread of my argument. A more succinct description of the thesis structure is provided in Table 1.1 (see p. 26 below).

Chapter 2, ‘Methodology’, outlines in detail the way in which I have interpreted and applied Foucault to my research question. It explains my choice of a discursive approach, what I understand that to mean and why I think it is analytically useful, and how I have tried to

operationalise it in practice. It also discusses my data, which is almost exclusively archival, and examines some of the implications of this for the kind of story I have been able to tell.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 present the archival material, and reinterpret that material in discursive form in order to isolate and describe discontinuities in the discourse. I begin in Chapter 3 with ‘The tenant’ as a subject of discourse. I show how, between the 1940s and the 1980s, the valorised subjectivity of the tenant as ‘occupant’ of Housing Department homes was problematised by the emergence of the ‘problem family’, and how the Housing Department sought to protect the status of its occupants by defining its field of responsibility such that ‘problem families’ were excluded from it and assigned to other, ‘welfare’ agencies. Through this, I identify a critical shift, located in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in which the Department’s status as speaking subject was assumed by the emergent community sector, with the effect of redefining the Department as responsible for the ‘welfare’ tenant.

In Chapter 4, ‘The tenancy’, I explore changes in the contractual relationship between the Housing Department and its occupants. In the 1940s and 1950s this relationship was predicated on a set of discursive practices that established a direct relationship between the Department, occupants and the materiality of the housing estate. By tracing changes in Departmental practice in relation to rent-setting, estate management and the provision of rental rebates to very low income tenants, I show how this relationship was problematised by the effects of external financial pressures. As a result of this problematisation, the identity of the Department was reinterpreted in relation to its financial responsibility to the state as a whole as a provider of rental services, the funding of which imposed an unreasonable burden upon government.

Chapter 5, ‘The estate’, examines the Department’s history as a builder of homes and housing estates. I show how this function was built upon the assertion of an expert subjectivity in relation to home building and involvement in the wider strategy of post-war industrialisation in Tasmania. I show how the form in which public housing communities developed, the ‘broadacre’ public housing estate, existed as a visually and socially distinct entity. This distinction became problematic within the context of wider social discourses which reinterpreted technical defects in layout, design and servicing as social problems. This facilitated the emergence of the ‘failed broadacre’ as an object of discourse and as the most prominent emblem of public housing failure more broadly.

In the concluding chapter, I draw together the archival material from the previous three chapters. Here I identify six discursive shifts that occurred between the 1940s and the 1980s. These shifts are identified as the community sector’s assumption of the status of speaking



subject; a redefining of the discursive relationship between the rent paid by the occupant and the home they were occupying; changed practices in relation to the role of gardening in producing the 'estate' as a collective project; the remapping of the Department's obligations against a different set of priorities in relation to its provision of subsidised rents; the displacement of the Department's relationship with the estate as the core organising principle of public housing discursive practice; and the emergence of the 'failed broadacre' as a problem to be palliated. I argue that these shifts in practice and policy arise from a change in the underlying discursive relations which produce knowledge about public housing. The change in knowledge that resulted is that the function of the state housing authority is no longer understood to be providing people with homes, but to be delivering to them a service. This chapter closes by drawing attention to the originality of my contribution to research in this area, and the space that has opened up for future original research as a result.

The thesis closes with a reflective Afterword reviewing the way in which my own position in relation to my research problem has altered since I began. In addition, I have also included an Appendix which summarises the characteristics of my 'data'.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

In this thesis I have used archival research and Foucauldian methodology to show how what we 'know' about public housing is contingent upon the way in which policy and practice is constituted by discursive relations. The effect of this is to render our knowledge of public housing contingent as well, and by extension, to imply that other ways of knowing are possible.

The thesis contributes in two areas, empirically and theoretically. Empirically, much of the archival material discussed in this thesis is new to housing scholarship in the sense that it has not previously been used in research before. Some of the findings challenge established 'fact' about Tasmanian public housing history, and others give 'facts' a different emphasis. Although the archival material is confined to the Tasmanian case, the changes in practice identified here have resonances to the wider Australian context and the thesis therefore has an empirical contribution to make at that level as well.

Theoretically, the thesis demonstrates a different application of Foucauldian archaeological approaches in housing studies, specifically in relation to the depth of archival research and the way in which that archival material has been redescribed in discursive terms. The approach, while particular to this project, has wider application as a way of illuminating the way in which local discursive practice constitutes broader discursive transformations.

**Table 1.1: Thesis outline**

1: INTRODUCTION	the origins of the research the research problem and the research question a summary of the research approach key findings summary of the contribution to knowledge
2: METHODOLOGY	rationale for Foucauldian methodology interpretation of Foucault's methods application of Foucauldian methodology to the research question the archive: data and analysis
3: THE TENANT	discursive practice: identifying, describing and governing the 'problem' tenant the rise of the community sector and the speaking subject
4: THE TENANCY	discursive practice: producing and governing the contractual relationship rental policy as a discursive object gardening practice problematizing the rental rebate
5: THE ESTATE	discursive practice: creating the housing estate positioning the Department within the discourse the object of the estate
6: CONCLUSION	six shifts in Tasmanian public housing discourse the reconfiguration in discursive relations knowing public housing summary of the argument theoretical and empirical contribution space for future research
7: AFTERWORD	reflection on the research problem

# CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

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‘Methodology’ is distinct from ‘method’. ‘Method’ refers to the mechanisms by which data is collected and analysed: interviews, coding, statistics. ‘Methodology’ refers to the underlying logic of the research process, and includes the researcher’s ontological and epistemological positions, the form given to the research questions by the researcher, the form given to the research by the research questions, and the purpose and values underlying the research. ‘Methodology’ exists within a broader theoretical framework. However, the boundaries between these elements are not clear cut. Theory and methodology can become closely intertwined, especially when the theoretical framework takes an explicit ontological or epistemological stance (see Mason 2002, esp. pp. 14-21, 30-32, 54-58).

In this thesis, I have adopted a Foucauldian approach. I use the word ‘approach’ because Foucault’s ideas could conceivably form the basis for theoretical framework, methodology or method, or all three. The difficulties of pinning down Foucault’s work are discussed in more detail below; however, according to O’Farrell, although his subject matter, technical vocabulary and commentary upon his own work shifted the ground constantly, Foucault

remained consistently interested in the same structural problems, namely how human beings seek to impose order on the world via their social structures and knowledge, the points at which these orders break down and how they change with the passage of time. He was also fascinated by the fact that there is always something that escapes our every attempt to immutably fix any order (O’Farrell 2005, p. 11).

On my own approach to Foucault, I make the following statements:

1. I *am not* ‘using’ Foucault as an overarching theoretical framework. This does not mean I will not be drawing upon elements of Foucauldian theory, but Foucault himself was very clear, though not in precisely these words, that he was not attempting to provide a Grand Theory of Everything (for example, see Foucault 1998 [1968], p. 327; 2002 [1972], pp. 175-177). For Foucault, knowledge was situated and specific to a time and a place. It could not be taken out of this place and applied elsewhere. Hence ‘theory’, in the sense of a broad explanatory framework for social phenomena, is not appropriate — what is required is to explain social phenomena in their specificity and historicity.
2. I *am* ‘using’ Foucault as a methodology. For me, the most striking realisation when reading Foucault’s work is that above all, it represents a different way of looking at the world, one that implies particular ontological, epistemological and axiological positions. Foucault

rejects historical continuity and progress and sees history instead as a space of dispersed events. Knowledge is something made, not something that lies ‘out there’ awaiting discovery; knowledge depends on the means of knowing. He sees everything as strange: ‘nothing produced or perceived by humans at any level — conceptual, social or material — is “natural” or self-evident’ (O’Farrell 2005, p. 17). And for Foucault, unpicking this strangeness, exposing it for what it is, becomes an active step in the process of provoking change and addressing injustice. My own research is on a small, contained and somewhat mundane aspect of the social world — the history of a government program in an out of the way state of a relatively uninfluential country. But this government program is important to me, and it is important to me that it be seen for what it is — not as something self-evident but as something contingent and produced within a specific arrangement of circumstances, and thus as something that can be otherwise than it is.

3. I *am* ‘using’ Foucault as a method — although my reading of Foucault’s approach and his work is that many of the techniques he uses for documentary analysis are the same techniques as historians use routinely, which means they are less explicitly ‘Foucauldian’ and more standard practice in a certain type of research. According to O’Farrell (2005, p. 49), while Foucault is often regarded as being sloppy in his empirical work, as more of his writing is published, it becomes evident that Foucault’s work was built upon painstaking empirical research, or, as O’Farrell puts it, ‘[e]ntire dungeons of hidden reading under-gird the visible structures of his major books’ (p. 6).

## Interpreting Foucault

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### Which version of Foucault?

Foucault is commonly understood as a ‘difficult’ theorist, and this is not just a case of an undeserved reputation. He *is* ‘difficult’ — to understand, to interpret and to apply. Why is this? Foucault was prolific and so there is a large volume of work — books, articles, lectures, interviews — to come to grips with. Foucault frequently refers back to previous work, and to other theorists working before and around him, in ways that assume the reader is familiar with what he is talking about. Moreover, individual pieces of work frequently appear to contradict each other: Foucault did not prepare his theories to completion prior to publication. His writings essentially represent an extended process of ‘thinking out loud’, or as Dean (1994, p. 200) suggests, for Foucault, the practice of writing was not about confirming what he already knew but about enabling him to know differently. Therefore Foucault’s writing includes the blind alleys, initial assumptions and working hypotheses that many writers erase from their work prior to publication. Then there is the added problem, at least for people like myself

who only speak and read one language which is not French, that not all of Foucault's writings have been translated, which means that quite a lot of material is simply inaccessible. O'Farrell (2005, pp. 7-8) notes some further problems, such as significant issues with the translation of Foucault's work which range from the difficulties of finding accurate and consistent English translations for Foucault's technical terminology to outright mistakes in translation.

The shifting ground of Foucault's work, the fact that he was never really 'finished', and the extreme specificity of his work — Foucault made it clear that his analyses were deliberately 'limited and regional', and not generalisable beyond the discourse being described (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 175-177) — all mean that multiple interpretations of his ideas are possible. This thesis is based upon my interpretation, although in the process of coming to it, I am indebted to the work of Kendall and Wickham (1999), Dean (1994), Veyne (1997 [1971]) and O'Farrell (2005). I have also been guided in my approach to Foucault by the 'suggested reading list' supplied by Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 151), which identifies those of Foucault's writings which the authors consider provide the most insight into his methods.

The list, in suggested reading order, comprises 'Questions of method' (Foucault 1991 [1980]), a revised transcript of a roundtable between Foucault and a group of historians; 'The order of discourse' (Foucault 1981 [1970]), the text of Foucault's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France; 'Foucault' (Florence 1998 [c. 1980]), an encyclopaedia entry attributed to 'Maurice Florence' but actually 'almost entirely' written by Foucault himself; *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 2002 [1972]), Foucault's major account of 'archaeology'; 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history' (Foucault 1977 [1971]), an essay written by Foucault to explain the relationship between his work and that of one of his intellectual sources, Nietzsche; 'Politics and the study of discourse' (Foucault 1991 [1968]), a revised version of a journal article originally published in 1968; 'On the ways of writing history' (Bellour & Foucault 1998 [1967]), an extended conversation between Foucault and Raymond Bellour about the wider intellectual context of Foucault's work; and 'On the archaeology of the sciences' (Foucault 1998 [1968]), a 'response' by Foucault to questions from the Paris Epistemology Circle. It is these works that have in the main informed the account of Foucault's ideas below, and I have detailed them not just to indicate that my interpretation is consequently only a partial one, but to delineate the scope of this interpretation in the context of Foucault's entire body of work.

### **The archaeology of knowledge**

In this thesis, I am interested in how knowledge about 'public housing' has been produced and used at different points in history, and in how this information can disturb the received wisdoms we have about public housing today. From a Foucauldian perspective, such

knowledge doesn't already exist 'out there', but is constructed and constituted by discourse. This of course begs the question, what is discourse?

Foucault (2002 [1972], p. 90) himself acknowledged that he uses the term 'discourse' in a perplexing way. In common usage, it is frequently used to designate 'what is said', or 'what is meant' or what is 'really' said, but Foucault is clear that his use of it does not imply any of these things (see 1991 [1968], p. 63; 2002 [1972], pp. 133-135). His analytical focus is not really the content of the discourse at all, but the groups of relations between different components of discourse that function as discursive rules. I have somewhat simplistically explained these rules elsewhere as 'ways of ordering raw "events" and making them meaningful' (Flanagan 2015a, p. 15).

Discourse, and the analysis of discourse, is central to Foucault's methodology — although his use of that explicit terminology falls away in his later work (see O'Farrell 2005, pp. 81-82). The focus of this methodology is to problematise what is 'taken for granted' in the present by a close analysis of historical material. For Foucault, while 'history' may be about the past, it is nevertheless a practice that is undertaken in the present, for present reasons (Dean 1994, p. 14). Through this practice, as Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 30) put it, 'we are meant to see beyond the contingencies that have made each of us what we are in order that we might think in ways that we have not thought and be in ways that we have not been'.

For Foucault, history is not a linear or continuous story, and it does not 'progress' either from or toward some ultimate point. Rather, historiographical concepts of continuity, thematic consistency and progression form part of the 'taken for granted' (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 23-29), as do the conventional dichotomies such as 'innovation/tradition' or 'stability/crisis' (1991 [1968], p. 62) and need to be treated as such. Foucault's (1991 [1980], pp. 75-76) analytical focus is instead on discontinuities, not to erase them or to explain them away, but to describe and account for them. That is, Foucault (1977 [1971], p. 154) seeks not the general behind the specific, but the specific itself, as it is in the historical moment. 'History' is not a narrative, but a dispersion of events, and historical analysis is about the legitimate relations between those events (2002 [1972], pp. 10-11, 24).

By stripping away the artificial or 'taken for granted' categories that conventional historiography imposes on events, Foucault (2002 [1972], p. 29) exposes the discursive domain, a space 'made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion of events and in the occurrence that is proper to them'. The aim is not just to set these discursive 'events' free but to identify their specificity and then to link these specific discursive events to events in the non-discursive domain (1998 [1968], pp. 306-

309). In taking such an approach, Foucault is not denying the notion of ‘change’; a discourse is not static. It can be and is transformed in ways that are specific to itself. These transformations do not provoke discursive change, but constitute it. For Foucault (1991 [1968], pp. 55-57), it is the analysis and theory of these transformations that is the practice of ‘history’, and the effect is to disrupt the accepted version of history by reconceptualising it as an array of raw material which can be collected and assembled in different ways, only one of which is the way that we ‘know’ today to be ‘true’ (Flanagan 2015a, p. 5).

It is these modes of collection and assemblage that are the real focus of the analytical process. Foucault understands them in terms of ‘relations’ — within discourse, the elements of discourse are related to each other in particular ways, and it is from these relations that knowledge, and therefore questions of ‘true’ or ‘false’ emerge. These relations are not random. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault (2002 [1972], pp. 34-43), having discarded conventional categories of organisation and explored a number of hypotheses, concludes that a discursive formation exists where there is a system of dispersion between a number of statements, or more explicitly, a ‘regularity’ in the arrangement of objects, types of statements, concepts and themes (pp. 41-42). He then goes on to outline four interdependent systems of formation for the various elements of discourse (objects, types of statement, concepts and themes) (see pp. 44-78, for details). There are multiple dimensions to each, but effectively, a system of formation is a group of relations functioning as a rule, a rule which says: this and this have to be related in a particular discursive practice for such an object or type of statement or concept or strategy to emerge and be arranged in such a way (p. 82). These elements of discourse are not themselves items of knowledge, but are the preconditions for ‘what later functions as an item of knowledge’, either ‘true’ or ‘false’ (p. 200). Or, to put in plainer language, for Foucault, knowledge is not pre-existing and self-evident, but is produced by the relations between the objects and subjects of discourse — that is, between ‘what [the discourse] is talking about’ (p. 46) and the fragmented array of subjective positions and functions available to individuals within it (1991 [1968], p. 58).

Not all objects and subjects become objects and subjects of knowledge, and Foucault’s analysis extended to the conditions that must be met in order for them to become so (Florence 1998 [c. 1980], pp. 459-460). The emergence of particular objects of discourse can be described and accounted for by attention to the ‘surfaces’ from which they emerge, the ‘authorities’ which define and describe, or ‘delimit’, them, and the ‘grids’ upon which they are organised and related, or ‘specified’, to each other (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 45-47, 55-59). The latter are defined as systems by which the objects of discourse ‘are divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, [and] derived from each other’ (p. 46). Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 28), explain them as ‘the systematic ways that phenomena are rendered accessible to us’ and

offer as an example the way in which the 'schoolchild', as a discursive object, is made accessible to us through the vocabulary and concepts available from educational psychology.

With regard to the subjects of discourse, Foucault (2002 [1972], pp. 55-60) rejected the notion of the universal or totalising subject, and instead understood the subject as something dispersed or fragmented amongst various statuses, sites and positions within the discourse. 'Human action within discourse is always positional', according to Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 53); Foucault (2002 [1972], p. 56) positions 'speaking subjects' within an 'institutional site' from which the subject speaks. This institutional site gives the discourse its 'legitimate source and point of application'. The subjects produced by the discourse of the Tasmanian Housing Department, for example, occupied the institutional site of 'the Department', and derived their legitimacy from it, and from the bureaucratic, administrative and cultural edifice that framed it.

But what is important about this technical description of discourse is not the complicated conceptual architecture that is outlined, but to stress the point that Foucault's focus is less upon the content of discourse, which is what it is, and more upon the conditions that must be met for a discourse to emerge in the way that it has emerged and in no other. He is less interested in what the elements of the discourse are, and more in what relations exist between them; he sees the relations as containing more explanatory power than the elements on their own, because it is these that determine the production and practice of knowledge. Foucault's ultimate purpose, then, is not to describe the rules themselves, but to explain the emergence of particular statements (which are governed by rules). Foucault seeks to answer questions like 'why this statement, and not another?' or 'why could the statement that did emerge not be anything but this?' For Foucault (1991 [1968], p. 63), 'discourse is constituted by the difference between what one could say correctly at one period ... and what is actually said'.

Answering these questions begins with the description of practice. In this context, 'practice' again means something particular. Practice lies at the intersection between 'what is said' (and what is known) and 'what is done' (Foucault 1991 [1980], p. 75); practice is 'a way of acting and thinking at once' (Florence 1998 [c. 1980], p. 463); discourse is a practice imposed upon things (Foucault 1981 [1970], p. 67). Because practices express the 'taken for granted', an analysis of practice can not only illuminate what is taken for granted, but demonstrate its 'precariousness' (1991 [1980], p. 75).

Practices, like knowledge, do not already exist 'out there'. Nor do they conform to some underlying universal template. Practices are located in time and space, which means that each practice has its own relationship with its historical surroundings, is affected by its own



combination of accident and happenstance and has its own particular effect upon the ‘real’ (1991 [1980], pp. 80-82; 1981 [1970], p. 69). As such, they also exist in relation to ‘non-discursive practices’ (2002 [1972], p. 75). It is not easy, from the examples which Foucault provides of such non-discursive practices (such as the ‘daily practice of emergent capitalism’) to ascertain how they can be defined and distinguished from discursive practices. He does indicate that the two categories of practice, discursive and non-discursive, are not entirely separate — the focus of analysis, he argues, should be ‘to describe a series of relations between it [discourse] and other systems outside it’; these other systems are ‘not discursive in nature, but may be of a technical, practical, economic, social, political or other variety’ (1998 [1968], p. 309). Elsewhere, he proposes that discourse functions in a ‘non-discursive context... (institutions, social relations, economic and political conjecture)’ (1991 [1968], p. 54), or, in a slightly different formulation, that discourses ‘carry out’ a function within the ‘field of non-discursive practices’. For example, particular forms of economic theory perform a function within ‘the political and economic decisions of governments’. This function can be mediated by certain ‘authorities’ — to continue the example of economic theory and government decisions, the institution of government gives certain individuals ‘the capacity to invest this discourse in decisions, institutions, or practices’ (2002 [1972], pp. 75-76).

Discourses also exist in relation to other discourses, and Foucault uses the word ‘constellation’ to refer to this inter-discursive system of relations. According to Foucault (2002 [1972], pp. 74-75), while the nature of these relations could take different forms, the configuration of the constellation, and its relations in turn with other constellations, ‘forms a principle of determination that permits or excludes, within a given discourse, a certain number of statements’. What this means is that elements that may appear ‘possible’ within the discourse itself when it is viewed in isolation, are not so when considered against the inter-discursive system as a whole, because they ‘are excluded by a discursive constellation at a higher level and in a broader space’.

The specificity and individuality of a discursive statement, its ‘singularity as an event’ (Foucault 1998 [1968], p. 309), means that an essential quality of statements is their exceptionalism, their rarity. That rarity means that discourse becomes an asset, and as an asset, it becomes a legitimate and desirable object of struggle (2002 [1972], pp. 133-136). Thus Foucault (1981 [1970], p. 52) identified a series of procedures by which he argued ‘the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed’. It is these procedures, and particularly one he characterises as the ‘will to know’, which establish the rules for how we have to know something in order for it to be regarded as ‘true’ (p. 55). Analytically, he broke these procedures down into groups and sub-groups, but he argued that in practice they were joined into ‘great edifices’ which acted as ‘systems of subjection’ (p. 64). In this context,

Foucault was defining and describing the transformation in the production and control of knowledge over a period of centuries, a transformation which, he argued, extended across a vast number of discursive formations; my analysis in this thesis is much more localised and specific. But nonetheless, the division between ‘true’ and ‘false’ represented by the will to know is a critical one when it comes to the linkage between the practice of the ‘taken for granted’ and the discourses which provide the rationale and justification for such practice. We govern ourselves and others by the production of truth, by which Foucault (1991 [1980], p. 79) means ‘not the production of true utterances, but the establishment of domains in which the practice of true and false can be made at once ordered and pertinent’.

The question of true and false — the difference between the ‘sayable’ and the unsayable’ (Abercrombie, Hill & Turner 2006, p. 112) — is one of the more provocative parts of Foucault’s work, because clearly many things that are ‘unsayable’ within discourse can be said, in that they can be (and are) physically uttered. My interpretation of Foucault’s arguments on this is that the focus is not on whether something can be said at all, but whether, when said, it has the status of truth. That is, one can say something, and discourse will not prevent one from doing so, but discourse will determine the rules which govern the production of knowledge, and therefore whether the thing that is said is received as credible or incredible, reasonable or unreasonable, sensible or ridiculous. Foucault’s conceptualisation of discourse also allows for what appears on the surface to be incompatibility; discourse can contain contradiction, but the contradiction takes the form of alternatives (that is, ‘either/or’), and these alternatives function as ‘link points’ in the system of the discourse, acting as ‘discursive subgroups’ from which larger discursive groups are created (Foucault 2002 [1972], p. 73)].

### **Why Foucault and not others?**

I have made it clear that my methodological approach is inspired by Foucault. However, the fact that I am analysing ‘discourse’ means that I have been asked at different points to justify why I have adopted ‘Foucauldian’ discourse analysis rather than another approach, and more specifically, why I have chosen it over the other approach commonly juxtaposed in methods textbooks (see for example Jacobs 2010) with that of Foucault. This is Norman Fairclough’s ‘textually-oriented discourse analysis’, as outlined in his book *Discourse and Social Change* (Fairclough 1992). Fairclough’s approach has been used effectively in a number of housing-related studies that have examined questions similar to those asked by this thesis (see for example Darcy 1999, 2009; Marston 2004b). Because of this, I think it is necessary to include a brief account of why I am using Foucault and not Fairclough.

Fairclough’s (1992, pp. 1-4) starting point was to address the lack of ‘a theoretically adequate and practically usable method’ of language analysis by developing such a method himself, albeit

one that drew on a wider conceptualisation of language and language use than that provided by linguistics. Therefore his conceptualisation of ‘discourse’ centres on text and language, although it also incorporates practice. Foucault’s conceptualisation, in contrast, centres on knowledge, which he specifically does not connect directly to text and language, and history.

Fairclough (1992, ch. 2, pp. 37-61) does acknowledge and draw upon Foucault, devoting a chapter of *Discourse and Social Change* to reviewing and critiquing Foucault’s approach to discourse. He identifies both the contribution Foucault’s work makes to the development of ‘textually-oriented discourse analysis’, and also outlines what he sees as key ‘weaknesses’ in Foucault’s work that limit its capacity to provide an effective account of social change. I have reviewed these criticisms below, and present my own contrasting readings of Foucault as a rationale for why I have used Foucault and not Fairclough. In summary, I do not think that the concerns Fairclough identifies represent major difficulties for the analysis that I am undertaking, and that in fact, Foucault’s approach is better suited to my research question.

The first criticism Fairclough (1992, p. 56) makes is Foucault’s neglect of textual analysis — that is, the lack of attention to ‘actual instances of discourse’. In response to this, my reading of Foucault is that he does not undertake textual analysis because he does not regard that as providing the answers to the questions that he is asking. There is a fundamental epistemological difference between the two approaches. For Foucault (2002 [1972], p. 30), ‘language analysis’ focuses only on the rules by which statements are made. But Foucault is not interested in what is said, but in why, in a particular time and place, some things are sayable (and doable) and some things are not. Therefore, analysing a ‘statement’ of discourse actually requires one to ignore the power of language ‘to designate, to name, to show, to reveal, to be the place of meaning or truth, and instead, [to] turn one’s attention to the moment that determines the statement’s existence’ (p. 125). While ‘[v]ocabulary, syntax, logical structure or rhetorical organization [*sic*]’ have their place — they represent the ‘terminal stage of discourse’ (p. 84) — they do not on their own provide the answers to the questions which Foucault is asking.

The second criticism Fairclough (1992, pp. 56-57) makes of Foucault’s work is that, ‘in the totality of his work ... the dominant impression is one of people being helplessly subjected to immovable systems of power’, an impression that Fairclough does not consider countered by Foucault’s ‘[insistence] that power necessarily entails resistance’. This weakness, for Fairclough, arises directly from ‘the absence of a concept of practice in Foucault’s analyses... By “practice” I mean real instances of people doing or saying or writing things’. The problem with this omission is that it leads to an account of social change that is overly ‘one-sided’

because it gives inadequate attention to the role of struggle and resistance in altering discursive structure (p. 58).

This criticism jars given Foucault's insistence, explored above, that his analysis 'begins' with a description of practice, but again, the two have different conceptualisations of 'practice'. Fairclough uses it to refer to what people do or say or write; for Foucault, 'practice' incorporates 'thinking' as well as 'doing', and what is 'thought' is based upon what is 'known', or what can be known, at a particular point, and is therefore discursively constituted. The key here is Foucault's explicit rejection of the all-powerful subject. In Foucault's account, subjects are discursively constituted and do not exist outside discourse; this is a conceptualisation that Fairclough (1992, p. 45) labels 'unsatisfactory' because it 'excludes active social agency in any meaningful sense'. For Fairclough, the subject does have some capacity to act from outside discourse and for Foucault, the subject does not. This does not mean that the Foucauldian subject cannot 'resist', but Fairclough's reading of Foucault is that 'resistance is generally contained by power and poses no threat' (p. 57). My reading of Foucault is that resistance can be a 'threat' and can bring about change, but that it can only do so using what is discursively available (see for example Foucault 2002 [1972], p. 230).

The third criticism made by Fairclough, again linked to a lack of 'analysis of "real practice and real text"' is that Foucault 'overstates' the constitutive properties of discourse. Fairclough (1992, p. 60) argues that discursive practice takes place within 'a constituted, material reality, with preconstituted "objects" and preconstituted social subjects'. That is, rather than discourse solely producing objects and subjects, they do have a pre-existing material aspect and are produced as the result of a 'dialectic' between discursive practice and reality.

My reading of Foucault is not that he denies the non-materiality of objects and subjects, but that what is of interest to him is not the materiality or non-materiality of the object, but the means by which the material object becomes an object of discourse, and likewise, how a material subject becomes a subject of discourse. There is an important difference between the body, as an arrangement of molecules, and the body, as an object of discourses about the body. The former, material body existed before the emergence of discourses about the body, and continues to exist afterwards, but once a discourse of the body has emerged and the body has become the object of that discourse, the material body also exists in relation to that discourse. That relation is not a straightforward, dialectical connection because what we 'know' about the material body and how we have to know it in order for it to be 'true' is produced by discourses of the body (see also Kendall & Wickham 1999, pp. 34-39).

Essentially, the differences between Fairclough and Foucault arise from the fact that they are working with different materials and producing different products. Veyne, in his essay 'Foucault revolutionizes history', makes a similar point, although the essay dates from some twenty years before Fairclough's book. Veyne (1997 [1971], p. 181) likens historiographical analyses to paintings. Conventional 'paintings' by historians are of objects; Foucault's 'paintings' are of relations. Or as Veyne puts it: Foucauldian genealogy 'does not ignore society, the economy, and so on, but it structures this material differently... This pictorial method produces strange paintings, in which relations replace objects. To be sure, the paintings are indeed those of the world we know.' But they look different.

### **Why archaeology?**

In addition to justifying my use of an explicitly Foucauldian form of discourse analysis, it is also appropriate to explain my choice of archaeology rather than genealogy. As I have noted (see p. 16 above), this decision is an unusual one, and positions me at the perimeter of the field of established housing research rather than the centre. Where housing scholars have drawn explicitly upon Foucault, they have tended to draw upon his theory of governmentality (see, for example, Bullen 2010; Flint 2002; McKee 2008; McKee & Cooper 2008; McKee 2011; Raco 2003; Schindler 2014, among others), a concept associated more with Foucauldian genealogies (Bevir 2010, p. 423). Governmentality refers to the 'way governments and other actors draw on knowledge to make policies that regulate and create subjectivities' (p. 423).

More recently, the literature on Foucauldian governmentality — both within and beyond housing studies — has sought to respond to more general criticisms that have been made of Foucault's ideas, and the ways in which they have been applied by others. In particular, these critiques focus on the alleged rejection of agency, caused in part by an overly monolithic conceptualisation of power, and a failure to provide sufficient attention to the ongoing role of the state in deploying governmental technologies (see Bevir 2010, pp. 424-425; Clarke 2008, p. 142; Flint 2002, p. 621; Raco 2003, p. 77). In his review of Foucault's lectures on neoliberal governmentality, Clarke (2009) points to Foucault's lack of attention to empirical detail in favour of the analysis of 'programmatic statements' as the principal problem.<sup>3</sup> McKee (2009, pp. 473-475) notes that many governmentality theorists rely on textually-oriented forms of discourse analysis dissociated from empirical realities, which leads to abstracted accounts that treat politics as a totalising rationality, assume that subjects are uniformly

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<sup>3</sup> As has been pointed out (see Bevir 2010, p. 424; Brady 2014, p. 17), Foucault's ideas about governmentality were conveyed only in lectures and interviews; he did not publish formally on the topic before his death in 1984. Therefore, these ideas can be interpreted as 'works in progress', as an outline of a research program rather than its results (see Ewald & Fontana 2008, pp. xiv-xv), even more so than is usual with Foucault's work.

constituted, and overlook the ‘mutation’ of governmental strategies in practice. Such approaches fail to ‘see’ the resistance of subjects or alternative rationalities that may be active.

Foucauldian scholars have responded to these critiques. For example, Bevir (2010, p. 430) calls for a ‘defiantly historicist, genealogical’ governmentality that gives more attention to the ways in which agency, however situated and contingent, can produce discontinuity and change. Brady (2014, pp. 26-32) advocates the incorporation of ethnographic methodologies into the ‘analytics of governmentality’ to allow consideration of contestation and agency, processes of subjectification and day-to-day practice (see also Lippert 2014, pp. 54-56; McKee 2008, p. 186). Li (2014, p. 37) interprets governmentality as involving the ‘pulling together’ of ‘governmental assemblages’ of knowledge and practice, which can include within them traces of contradictory rationalities. McKee (2008, 2009) proposes the adoption of a ‘realist governmentality’ in which the commencing assumption is that ‘subjects might refuse to know their place’ (2009, p. 479). Stenson (1998, p. 338) calls for governmentality to be reworked as an ‘instrument of renewal’ of the values and institutions of social liberalism.

Both the critique and re-visioning of governmentality are pertinent to my own research because criticisms of Foucault seem to intensify when it comes to his earlier archaeological work. Bevir (2010, pp. 423-424; 2013, p. 155) argues that Foucault’s archaeologies are inherently structuralist, and that it is from the vestiges of structuralism retained even in his later work that his ‘hostility’ to agency derives. But others suggest that the criticisms which have been made apply more accurately to those who have taken those ideas forward than to Foucault himself (Brady 2014, pp. 17-26; McKee 2009, pp. 472-473; O’Farrell 2005, pp. 9-10). Thus Brady (2014, p. 24) suggests, for example, that Foucault’s account of power as operating not as a coherent system but in shifting configurations in and of itself suggests something which is contestable rather than inescapable. McKee (2009, p. 471) characterises Foucault’s conceptualisation of power as being about ‘the “management of possibilities”, including the possible actions that might be taken by others, and argues that if power is a strategy, then resistance can be understood in terms of the invention of alternatives. And likewise, as I have outlined (see p. 35 above), I do not think a Foucauldian approach is incompatible with the notion of agency or with empirical specificity.

Why, however, have I chosen archaeology? Because, returning to O’Farrell’s (2005, p. 69) point about its ‘point of attack’, I am interested in how hostile attitudes to public housing were produced out of an array of discursive material which could have produced alternative views. That is, I am interested in why one particular discursive formulation and not another has emerged. I am, at least in this research, less interested in the genealogical question of how this

specifically hostile knowledge about public housing has been controlled and directed for the purposes of managing populations. Thus archaeology is the obvious way forward.

## Applying Foucault

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Foucault's empirical studies examined issues such as the discourse and practice of nineteenth century psychiatry or sexuality or punishment, and when he provides examples from these studies of how he has used particular concepts and theories, they are specific, contained examples, relevant only to the discourse and practice of nineteenth century psychiatry or sexuality or punishment. What then can I legitimately draw from his work to inform my own study of twentieth and twenty-first century public housing provision in Tasmania?

There is a vast secondary literature on Foucault, including many works providing advice on how to 'apply' Foucault's methods. Of these, I did find four contributions particularly helpful, not because they provide a list of instructions (they make it clear that lists of instructions are not possible), but because they have provided ways of conceptualising the whole of Foucault's work which take account of its variability and shifting focus and they offer glimpses of how it might be possible to 'do' such work in other contexts.

Dean (1994, p. 2) has conceptualised Foucault's work as a 'history of truth', progressed through three stages: analysis of the system through which discourse is formed, analysis of the way discourse is embedded in institutional practice and power relations, and analysis of how these practices are related to practices of the self (or, more pithily, 'truth', 'power', 'self'). O'Farrell (2005, p. 54) similarly explains Foucault's work by drawing on broad themes or principles, although she identifies five such consistent, underpinning and intertwined assumptions, the adoption of which 'leads to something that vaguely resembles an "application" of Foucault's work'. These assumptions centre on the questions of order, history, truth, power and ethics (meaning the ethical consideration of social justice). Veyne, whose essay on Foucault was published while Foucault was still alive<sup>4</sup>, sees Foucault as a historian characterised by his focus on practices, which were to be described 'in quite objective terms ... *without presupposing anything else at all*' (Veyne 1997 [1971], p. 153, emphasis in original). This suspension of supposition is consistent with Kendall and Wickham's (1999, pp. 5-20) account of how to 'use' Foucault. They conceptualise Foucault's work as a series of 'histories' about details, complexity and difference, and suggest that archaeology, genealogy and discourse (see discussion above) are best conceived of as Foucault's 'ordering tools' (pp. 21-56).

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<sup>4</sup> Foucault (1991 [1980], p. 86) mentions this essay favourably in 'Questions of method'.

From all of this I take the lesson that ‘using’ Foucault is about methodology, rather than method (which, as I note above, looks very much like ordinary historical research). That is, that it is an approach characterised by seeing the world in terms of relations and contingencies, by consistent scepticism with regard to established ways of thinking, seeing and doing, by keeping the focus on questions of possibility and constraint, by using description as the primary analytical mechanism, and by deploying history as a practice in itself.

### **A question of data**

The starting point of a Foucauldian analysis is to describe practices. More prosaically, I needed to consider what sources of data are available, and how I could generate data from those sources (Mason 2002, pp. 51-54). For a purely historical research project, data is traditionally found in ‘primary’ sources — materials produced contemporaneously with the events they describe. In a sociological research project, it is usual, though not compulsory, to supplement documentary sources with the use of interviews with people involved in the research area. Given that the period I am concerned with is so recent, the range of relevant material that could legitimately constitute data for this project is vast.

In terms of methods (as opposed to methodologies), Foucault operated as a historian — he looked at documents and other fragments of the past to obtain evidence of what was thought and done in the past. However, this is not a discursively neutral activity. Foucault (2002 [1972], pp. 138-140) points out that texts do not ‘sleep ... in dusty libraries’, having survived by chance or choice. Rather, texts survive due to the operation of an explicit set of practices, techniques and institutions and are ‘invested’ in them. This view of documentary evidence is linked to Foucault’s conceptualisation of history. History is not a form of collective memory and documents are not simply an aid to that memory; rather, ‘history is the work expended on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc.) that exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized [*sic*] form’ (p. 7). My interpretation of this is that when describing the practices I identify through analysis of the documentary evidence, it is important to keep in mind that the things I am doing (description, identification, analysis) are themselves discursive practices, and that the particular documents that I am using have been made available to me not by chance or design, but as the culmination of a series of discursive practices which sit in a specific relation to those documents. They include the choices that I myself have made regarding what is or is not important.

### **From methodology to method: the process**

The following outlines the way in which I undertook this research. I note in passing here Dean’s (1994, p. 2, emphasis in original) observation of Foucault’s approach to such questions:



that for Foucault, '[m]ethodological codification ... is best regarded as a summary that revisits and clarifies analysis *after* the event rather than a rationalistic plan put into practice by analysis'. The following may imply the existence of a rationalistic plan which was put into practice by analysis, but the actual process was far more inductive and iterative. As Rosenberg (1989, p. 37) has pointed out, 'the principle of "messiness", long rejected with some embarrassment, should not be denied in a truthful account of the research process itself'.

This research was messy research. There were a number of false starts, particularly in the data collection, which generated much data but few meaningful findings. The messiness of the process is described in Figure 2.1 (see p. 44 below). This was due to a combination of practical considerations (most particularly, the need to obtain early ethics approval to satisfy an administrative requirement of my candidature) and a lack of confidence — in my case, a conviction that, due to the difficulty of his work, I needed to 'sneak up' on Foucault rather than engage with him immediately and directly. This meant that I initially devoted my energies to pursuing a data collection approach which turned out to be inappropriate in relation to my research question and my overarching methodological framework. Having realised this error, in part thanks to the perspective obtained from a six month break, I reviewed and recalibrated. Another misstep was to initially design a research project which was too large. Originally, I wanted to investigate not just the origins and development of hostility towards public housing, but also the effects this had on people working in the sector today. The combination of past and present, given the way in which the data collection process unfolded and more particularly, the depth and detail of the analysis I wanted to undertake, was unrealistic, especially when personal circumstances (the birth of my first child) imposed additional time constraints. I therefore dropped consideration of the second research question from this project. I am still interested in this issue and intend to pursue it further, but it requires a different methodological approach to the one I have pursued here.

One part of my initial data collection, focussed around a textual analysis of key examples of 'official discourse' (Burton & Carlen 1979) from the last 75 years, I set to one side. The findings of that analysis have been fed into parts of this thesis, but function more as background and context to the detail found in the archive. The second part of my early data collection comprised six interviews, recorded for transcription purposes. These had originally been intended as the first six of dozens, but I found that the results were not what I had expected. Essentially I had had six fascinating conversations with six people who were thoroughly immersed in and familiar with the housing policy landscape in Tasmania, conversations which had raised many questions and made me think about issues in new and unexpected ways, but which had generated nothing substantive that I could take hold of to find a specific answer to my research question. Following each, I revised my interview schedule and approach, but this

did not seem to have any effect. The information about the history of public housing which I obtained was still too generalised, too disconnected from the temporal and geographical dimensions of that history. And it was sparse. What I wanted was not just detail, but a density of detail, mundane, unremarkable detail, tied to specific places, times and events.

In relation to research on neoliberal governmentality, Brady (2014, pp. 13-14) has argued for the adoption of more ethnographical techniques, on the basis that researchers drawing exclusively on archival material ‘can more effortlessly bracket out ... multiplicity and complexity’, thus overlooking detail which is actually critical. I agree with Brady that exclusively archival research *can* lead to this, but I do not think it necessarily *has* to lead to this. My experience is that archival sources can generate ample evidence of the kind of ‘multiplicity and complexity’ to which Brady refers. I wonder if the tendency to ‘bracket’ arises from the kind of material classified as ‘archival’ — I think Brady (p. 28) is right when she notes that ‘policy documents, promotional material, legislation and political speeches’ provide only a ‘thin sense’ of modes of governing and argues that researchers also need to ‘[use] materials from the “real” or the everyday’ to obtain a fully developed picture — but I think archival research that uses the records of the everyday can achieve this too. This is certainly borne out by my experience undertaking this research.

Following my return from leave, I took some of the fragments of detail I had obtained through the interviews and sought clarification, verification and perhaps additional information through the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office (TAHO). My initial selection of items to look at was therefore led by the interview data, although once ‘in’ the files I started to generate my own trails to follow. A range of meanings and differing levels of significance have over the years been given to the term ‘the archive’ (see Steedman 2002), not least by Foucault. But at its most prosaic, ‘archive’ is a technical term for a repository of documents open to the public. In Tasmania, ‘the archive’ is the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, which has statutory responsibility under the *Archives Act 1983* for regulating state and local government records, and also manages private records of significant community and historical value.

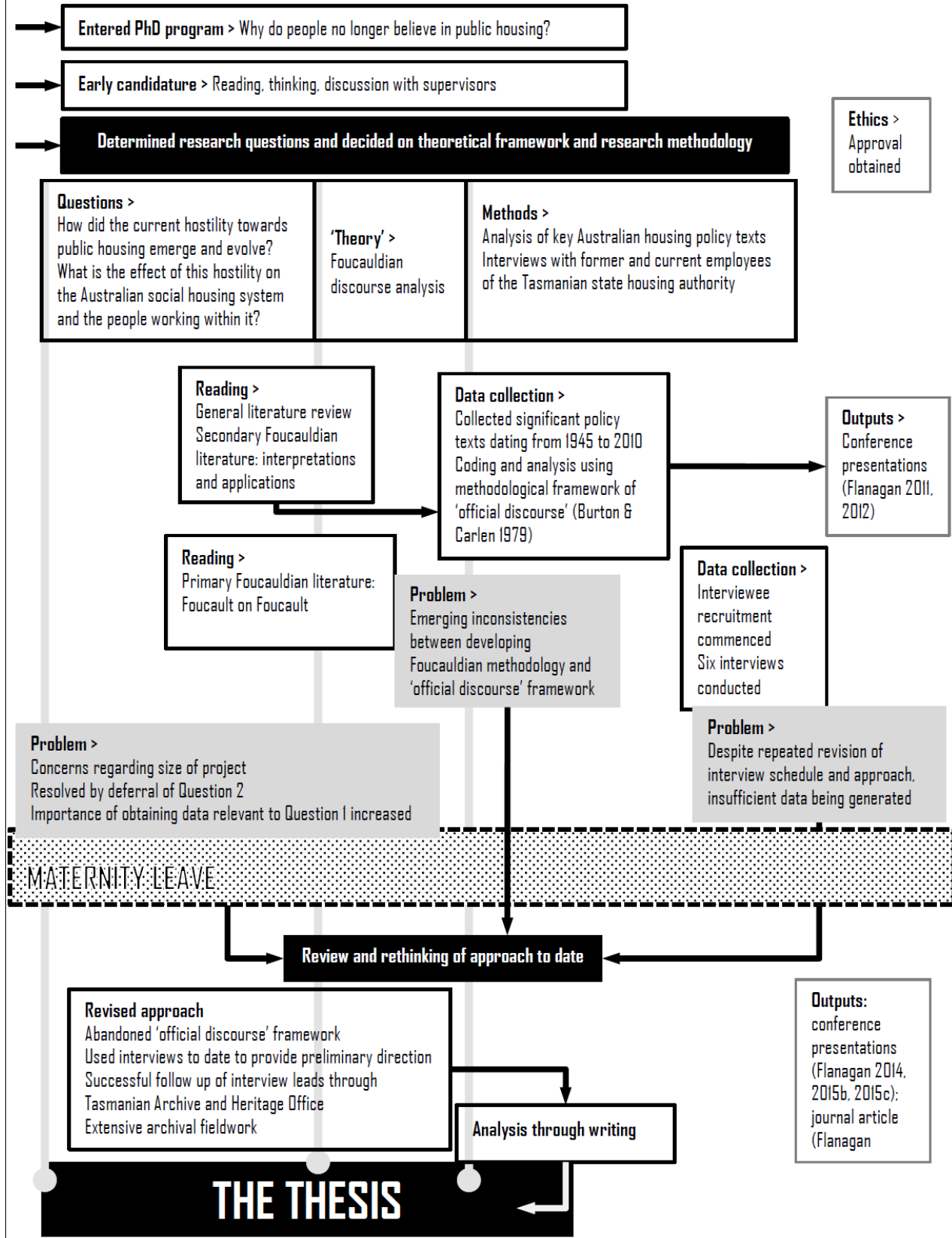
What I found in the archive was a rich source of precisely the kind of everyday detail I had been hoping for from my interviews. I found files replete with a diverse array of documents, most of them with dates and names and positions attached: correspondence received and copies of correspondence sent; internal and external memoranda; the official minutes of meetings as well as, sometimes, the notes of individual participants; Cabinet submissions — sometimes filed along with memos, notes and ‘working’ documents, all of which can shed light on their development, reception and outcome; file notes, which can range from typed formal records of key conversations and processes through to handwritten jottings on scrap paper identified

only by an illegible set of initials and a date; photocopies of pages from books or extracts from other files; copies of notices circulated to staff; cuttings from newspapers and magazines; copies of submissions or statements of policy from non-government agencies or individuals; internal reports; discussion drafts; briefing notes prepared by more junior staff for their superiors or for the Minister; brochures and information sheets; plans of houses or of the layout of subdivisions; invoices, purchase orders, receipts and other material pertaining to accounts payable and receivable; and marginalia of all kinds. In addition to the material contained in the archive stacks, TAHO also holds a catalogued collection of 'Tasmaniana', much of which is material which is unavailable elsewhere. Included amongst this collection are copies of various reports, some produced by the Department, some by consultants, conference papers delivered at events organised by the Department itself or attended by its representatives and pamphlets and brochures of various kinds.

This is not to say that as data, this material was flawless. At a purely pragmatic level, the archives contain that material which the Housing Department has deemed it appropriate under the legislation to retain. Not everything is there. Some narratives are unresolved because the file ends abruptly or omits certain items or because what was really interesting happened 'off-stage' (meaning, was not recorded in that particular file, if it was recorded at all). Some material is still under embargo and other documents have not yet been transferred from the custody of the agency into the archive. I may have missed relevant material. There were many, many, many more files available than I was able to look at, and they were not always named with any clear indication as to their contents. There was also the question of the time I could reasonably spend on fieldwork and the prospect of diminishing returns on time invested.

At a methodological level, there are also issues. I have elaborated elsewhere on the contingent nature of documentary sources (Flanagan 2015a, pp. 7-9). Records are, as Trace (2002, pp. 139-140) points out, 'socially constructed and maintained'. Texts, particularly policy texts, do not always directly reflect what actually happens on the ground (Jacobs 1999). But these qualities do not render documents invalid or useless as data. As Foucault (1991 [1980], pp. 81-82) argued, what happens in theory is relevant to what happens in practice. Theoretical programs, for example, do affect reality — they 'induce a whole series of effects in the real (which isn't of course the same as saying that they take the place of the real)', by becoming institutions, informing behaviour, functioning as explanatory frameworks. In the same way, the form in which participants in historical events choose to record things that happened has a historical effect, and this effect can be analysed along with other historical events.

**Figure 2.1: Messy steps in the data collection process**



My analysis of this data took place primarily through the medium of the written word. Each document was read and detailed notes were taken of its form, its content and its documentary context. It was through the process of taking these notes that I undertook such necessary methodological tasks as assessing the document's value as a piece of evidence relevant to the research, its authenticity and credibility as a source, its relationship to the rest of the material in the files and the extent to which its meaning could be accurately interpreted (Scott 2006, pp. xxii-xxiii). Then, away from the archive, I reconfigured my notes — breaking them up into tables, diagrams, ordering them by content, by chronology, by relevance to a particular question, rewriting them as narratives. Gradually, these reconfigurations formed sections, then chapters, and ultimately, formed a thesis. I went back and forth between these iterations and the 'original' notes multiple times, and as I did so, I tried as much as possible to avoid merely cutting and pasting — each time I wrote out what a particular document had 'said', I tried to do so afresh.

This process of reconfiguration was my way of 'exposing' the discursive domain (Foucault 2002 [1972], p. 29). Although some of the files I looked at appeared to be chaotic jumbles of paper, they all nonetheless presented information in an ordered format. In the Tasmanian archive, material is formally catalogued by creating agency ('TA68: Housing Department [1]'), series ('AD652: Files relating to housing, but also including social welfare policy and staffing matters') and item ('AD652/1/2: CAB-02/1 Part 2 – Cabinet Decisions and Submissions'). Physically, items are contained in numbered stacks and located in specific buildings ('BER [Berriedale repository] Q 7 3'). Material is delivered to the researcher in archive boxes, spiral binders and manila folders. Pages are collected together with bulldog clips or in-file binding systems and folders are tied together with strips of pink fabric. Such details are considered historiographically relevant, and retaining the order of documents as they were originally placed in the file is reckoned to be of critical importance (at one point, I witnessed an archivist's undiluted horror at discovering that one of the archive's patrons had arbitrarily reorganised the separate pages of the item she was using into a more 'logical' order). By rearranging my notes of the content of these files according to multiple systems and schemes, then, I sought to disrupt the categories that their origins had imposed upon them, although at all times I was careful to maintain the integrity of the material as evidence. By this I mean that I followed the ethical position outlined by Macintyre: if, by giving differential emphasis to selected pieces of historical evidence in order to impose a coherent narrative, 'historians create history, they are not free to invent or falsify it' (Macintyre & Clark 2003, pp. 29-30).

I cannot explain how this process worked with any more precision than to say that for me, as for Richardson (2002, p. 417), 'writing [is] a method of inquiry... I write to find things out'. My approach is, however, consistent with that advocated in the sociological literature (see

Scott 1990, pp. 19-35; McCulloch 2004, pp. 42-47; Platt 2006a, 2006b). It also fits with the account Foucault gave of his own work: ‘an experiment much more than a system. No recipe, hardly any general method. But technical rules: documentation, research, verification’ (1983, as quoted in O’Farrell 2005, p. 52).

## **Conclusion: a note on the presentation of findings**

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My adoption of a Foucauldian methodological framework and my use of writing as a form of analysis have informed the way in which I have presented my findings. In order to expose as much of the ‘raw’ material as possible before I re-order it according to my argument, in the following three chapters I have deliberately adopted a descriptive rather than an interpretative approach to the archival evidence. This does not mean that I have avoided analysis — analysis is present in the selection of examples, for a start — but that, on the whole, I have sought to confine this in-chapter analysis to redescribing the archival evidence in discursive terms. My interpretation of the implications of that discursive evidence, and the empirical and theoretical claims I make as a result, is not unfolded in detail until Chapter 6.

# CHAPTER 3: THE TENANT

## Introduction

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In this chapter, I describe the changing subjectivities available to the people who lived in homes provided by the Tasmanian Housing Department between 1945 and 1989.<sup>5</sup> This allows me to identify a major discursive shift which occurred in this period. This shift concerns the relationship between the Department and the discursive practice of ‘welfare’. Through the archival evidence, it becomes clear that the community sector took on the role of speaking subject in defining this relationship where once this role had been filled by the Department.

Between the 1940s and the 1980s, available tenant subjectivities underwent marked modification and ultimately transformation. In the early years, the Department’s clients were assigned the position of ‘slum dweller’, a subject-position produced by the practices of slum abolition and housing allocation. Slum-dwellers who were successful in applying for public housing became occupants, but this new subjectivity was problematised by the emergence of the ‘problem family’. The ‘problem family’ is both an object of discourse and a subject-position produced by and governed through the discursive practice of rehabilitation. From the 1970s, changed attitudes towards the welfare state assigned tenants to the subject-position of ‘welfare’ recipient, but the emergence of the community sector as a prominent discursive presence made available to tenants a new and privileged subjectivity, one constituted by the Department’s failure to meet their needs.

These changes in tenant subjectivities were predicated on a changed conceptualisation of need. In the 1940s and 1950s, ‘need’ was constituted by the material conditions of an individual’s existing housing. Such conditions could, in theory at least, be assessed against some kind of universal and objective standard. The post-war resource constraints which produced the conditions allowing the emergence of a discursive claim that some people experienced poor housing conditions because of poor decision-making did not disturb this understanding of ‘need’. By the 1970s and 1980s, however, ‘need’ was being reorganised and increasingly

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<sup>5</sup> Statutory responsibility for the Tasmanian government housing program was originally assigned to the Agricultural Bank of Tasmania, a statutory agency with a three-member Board primarily responsible for the promotion of agricultural development. In 1953, those responsibilities were passed to a newly created Housing Department, headed by a Director of Housing. Over the years, the Department has undergone name changes — between 1977 and 1983, it was the Housing Division of the Department of Housing and Construction, and in 1989, it became Housing Tasmania. To avoid confusion, the term ‘Housing Department’ is used consistently throughout.

attached to membership of certain ‘special’ groups which conferred not just the need for housing but the need for an associated array of services and support.

The Department’s technical expertise in the construction of houses had qualified it to respond to the first form of need, but not to the second. In fact, the Department had deliberately not sought to respond to social needs beyond the need for housing and had used its status as speaking subject to demarcate that division of labour. What had occurred by the end of the 1980s was not just that social needs were now being advanced as necessary components of housing need, but that the authority to define the object of ‘need’ and to delineate the limits of the Department’s responsibility in relation to it had been appropriated by the community sector. The effect of this transfer of the position of speaking subject was to produce the knowledge that a government agency was by its very nature incapable of responding appropriately and perfectly to individuals in need.

## Slum dwellers

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### **The discursive practice of slum abolition**

In the archive there are multiple references to the two ‘problems’ most commonly identified with the wartime and immediate post-war housing situation in Australia: the prevalence of substandard housing and a serious, absolute shortage of dwellings. Thus a member of the Hobart City Council’s Health Department wrote to the Town Clerk in 1938 to report that although there were 160 houses on the Council’s list of properties considered unfit for habitation, it was ‘impossible’ to proceed with demolition orders due to the lack of alternative accommodation for the families who would be evicted (Slum Abolition League 1938a). The discursive practice evident here, in which individuals deemed to have certain authority and expertise could identify and label housing as ‘substandard’ within a codified body of knowledge about what that quality was, coexisted and interacted with a different kind of discursive practice: the identification and labelling of ‘slums’. The latter is significant because it finds expression in the discourse of the early public housing program and because of its relationship to the discursive practice of housing management.

During World War II, the Tasmanian Slum Abolition League actively campaigned on the slum problem in Hobart. There is ample evidence in the archive to show that it was influenced by the work of the Melbourne-based social reformer F Oswald Barnett<sup>6</sup> (Slum Abolition League 1940a) and the Victorian Housing Commission of which Barnett was a founding member

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<sup>6</sup> Barnett (1883-1972) was a Methodist lay preacher and accountant who was also a prominent and highly influential campaigner for slum reclamation in the Australian state of Victoria (see Holst 2006).



(Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1941a, 1941b; Slum Abolition League n.d.-a, 1940i, 1940h, 1940g, 1941c, 1941d, 1941h, 1941g, 1941k, 1941j, 1942d, c. 1942e). Like Barnett, the League undertook a self-consciously careful, objective, and comprehensive study of 'slums', including a 'preliminary slum investigation' involving two surveys, a house survey and a social census. The instruments for both were almost certainly based on those developed in Victoria (see Howe 1988b, pp. 24-25), and the results were interpreted through the same classification system used by the Victorian Slum Investigation Committee, with the 'slums' categorised into slum pockets, congested areas, blighted areas, decadent areas, mixed areas and shanty areas (Slum Abolition League c. 1942a, c. 1942b).

Both surveys were intensely detailed. The social census asked whether the 'husband' and 'wife' in the household were drinkers, dissolute, derelict or criminal, and whether their parents were 'of same type'. Information was also collected on whether husbands were unionists or members of the Friendly Society, on whether wives were 'slovenly' and on the quality of their 'love of and care for children', and on the condition of the property, including whether it contained facilities like a bathroom, a wash house or a kitchen sink (Slum Abolition League c. 1942c). The house survey was concerned with cataloguing the dimensions and material composition of the dwelling. Included among the survey points were the height of the land in relation to the kerb, the level of floors above ground and the construction and state of the roof (c. 1942d).

The League's second annual report contained some of the results, including that within two miles' radius of the GPO, there were 1100 houses 'without bathrooms with the proper facilities' (Slum Abolition League 1943d; also n.d.-f). This lack of amenities was one of the principal characteristics by which slums were identified and labelled. One activist noted that '[m]any of these unfortunate people have never cooked on a proper stove' and that baths were 'a rarity in the bad areas' (n.d.-a). The League placed a number of newspaper advertisements containing photographs of slum properties, accompanied by text which drew attention to their inadequacy (1941i, 1941m, 1941l). For example, one photograph of an open fireplace is accompanied by text explaining that upon this fireplace 'the occupiers must prepare their meals, boil the washing, and heat the water for bathing in a tub... You wouldn't like to be reduced to those conditions yourself, so don't you think you could give a helping hand...?' (1941m).

Slum-dwellers themselves were defined not just by their lack of 'proper' facilities but also by their lack of knowledge of how to use them. Part of the discursive practice of slum activism was therefore the promotion of schemes to ensure that slum dwellers, when rehoused, '[got] the best out of their new homes' (Slum Abolition League 1943c) by providing them with

appropriate 'education' in how to use unfamiliar new facilities (1941h). Advocates suggested "half-way houses" where they [slum dwellers] could receive a little coaching in domestic economy, personal cleanliness, how to take care of food, and how to cook on a proper stove' before being moved to their new home (c. 1942e), and established a centre at a property in Hobart to provide such 'coaching' (1943d). They also called for the Government's own housing scheme to make provision for education, training and ongoing guidance (1941b), suggesting the employment of female welfare officers to make regular visits to homes to 'inspect' and 'assist' residents (1941b). As with slum identification, this suggestion was informed by practice elsewhere: the Victorian Housing Commission used it (1941f) and clippings from English publications contained in the League's files describe similar practices, referencing the work of Octavia Hill (1937a, 1937b).<sup>7</sup>

Once re-education had been achieved, the League wanted to provide slum-dwellers not just with properly-equipped homes, but with a 'proper', 'modern' (sub)urban environment (Slum Abolition League 1943c). The focus was particularly upon children. The League's concern extended beyond the immediate health and wellbeing of children brought up in slums to include the possible effect on their characters. Another advertisement, this one featuring a photograph of the yard of a slum home, told the reader that 'you can see there is no need to wonder how hard it would be to rear a good citizen here' (1941i), and in a talk to the League, a council inspector argued that 'to rear healthy children with clean minds, clean bodies and a clean outlook on life, we must have good housing conditions for them. It is no use expecting to have decent citizens if people are going to huddle together in one house' (1940e). One of the Victorian Housing Commission's annual reports, a copy of which is contained in the League's files, said that slum reclamation was being pursued in the interests of children's 'moral and physical salvation' (see 1941f); Howe (1988b, p. 33) attributes this phrase to Barnett.

The Commonwealth Parliament's Joint Committee on Social Security's interim report on housing, a precursor to the Commonwealth Housing Commission (1944) report which laid out the template for the Australian public housing system, put considerable emphasis on the role of slums in creating 'juvenile delinquents'. The Joint Committee stated:

In the slums, children are born into conditions which allow them only the remotest chance of surviving their environment. Compared with children in homes of proper standards and human values, their future is prejudiced before they are born. The great density of population ... inevitably results in the absence of a proper segregation of the sexes ... and, as a natural sequence, low moral standards and a coarseness of character which, if it does

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<sup>7</sup> According to Arthurson (2008, p. 490), Octavia Hill (1838-1912) 'aimed to bridge the gap between the classes through providing middle-class role models and leadership, in the form of well-bred women acting as volunteers to visit her working-class tenants ... to provide advice and assistance'.

not bring early trouble in the life of the child, is the first characteristic of the street larrikin and first offender. .... While it must be remembered that within the slums there are to be found many who retain their self-respect and whose homes are a model of cleanliness and industry in spite of great economic handicaps, too frequently insobriety, and immorality stalk the streets and dominate the homes, while underfed and underclad children are commonplace' (Joint Committee on Social Security 1942, p. 15).

For advocates, the application of 'modern' town planning would produce an environment of order, beauty and efficiency in which children's salvation could be attained (Slum Abolition League n.d.-b, 1941g, 1944, 1946). The League was closely associated with an organisation called the National Fitness Council<sup>8</sup> (1942c, 1942a, 1942b, 1943a, 1943d), which advocated for the adoption of 'proper' town planning principles (see for example n.d.-e, n.d.-b, 1943e), including provision for recreation and play areas (1941b, 1943d). The League (n.d.-d) argued that using 'Nature's resources', like 'proper play areas, unscreened sunshine, fresh air[,] interesting exercise, sufficient rest and wholesome food' in a collective effort 'to organise and direct the leisure time of the world' was as important as organising and directing industry; one of its advertisements used the slogan '[t]he boy without a playground is Father [sic] to the man without a job' (*Mercury* 1 December 1943, p. 15). More specifically, the National Fitness Council claimed that playgrounds developed health, physical efficiency, morality, initiative, self-confidence, imagination, obedience, justice, happiness and citizenship in children, while diminishing idleness, temptation, exclusiveness, social barriers, selfishness, gang spirit, rowdyism, unfairness, delinquency and reformatories (Slum Abolition League n.d.-e).

As expressed through the discourse of the anti-slum movement, therefore, the practice of town planning was directed at the production of a physical environment which would remake the lives of its occupants. One activist, a doctor, presented a fictional example contrasting Mr A and Mr B; the former lived in a slum, the latter had been rehoused by 'a beneficent Housing Commission in a modern home, adapted to the needs of his family as regards size and with reasonable space around it'. While Mr A sought to escape 'the distasteful atmosphere of his own home' through alcohol and gambling, Mr B

is spending his spare time in making a garden, building a swing for the kids, manufacturing for himself small furniture and furnishings. ... [H]e takes his wife to the pictures every Saturday night. His wife is more attractive now, as her bright new home has inspired her to brighten herself up too (Slum Abolition League 1942f).

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<sup>8</sup> The National Fitness Council was established as a national body with state-based branches under the National Fitness Act 1941 in order to promote physical fitness, especially among children. In a 1946 report, the Joint Committee on Social Security (1946, pp. 43-44) linked its activities to the development of 'good citizenship'.

Town planning was classified by advocates as expert knowledge, to be deployed only by those who were 'qualified' to do so (Slum Abolition League 1943d). They lamented the lost opportunities of past urban development (n.d.-c, 1936c, 1943b), and identified town planning as a 'science' which would lead to the proper ordering of social activity (1938b, 1943b). In so doing they were not confined to the policy fringe. In 1943, the Hobart City Council contracted a consultant from Melbourne to develop a town planning scheme for the city (Cook 1945; see also Slum Abolition League 1943e), and after the War, the Board of the Agricultural Bank (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1943, p. 7) found it necessary to emphasise the Bank's familiarity with contemporary developments in town planning methods and its role in preparing and introducing Tasmania's *Town and Country Planning Act 1944* to the Parliament (see also Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1945, pp. 2-3).

### **The objects of slum abolition discourse**

The processes of identification and classification which formed the discursive practice of slum abolition produced, as objects of discourse, the slum house and the 'properly' planned suburb. Both these objects were defined in spatial terms. The spaces of the slums were, despite their small and densely populated rooms, spaces of absence: slum houses did not contain what they should have contained. The home in which it would be hard to 'rear a good citizen' had 'no washhouse, no sink, a small drying area, ... no room to grow vegetables or flowers' (Slum Abolition League 1941i). And what they did contain was incorrectly distributed — according to one polemic, '[i]n over 40 kitchens around Hobart you will find beds in the kitchen because of the shortage of rooms' (1942e, 1942g). The town-planned suburb too was defined in spatial terms, but as an orderly space with precisely distributed contents. For example, according to a National Fitness Council leaflet entitled 'Measure your town against these standards', 12% of open space would be allocated for use as parks and playgrounds, there would be infant welfare centres and children's playgrounds within a one third of a mile radius of each home, and the whole would include 'a spacious square or place, containing the main buildings — Town Hall, Law Courts, Library, Gallery, and the main public monuments and utilities' (n.d.-b). The slum house and the properly planned suburb had this spatial character because they were produced within a discursive formation which related physical space to the growth of the individual. A confined and disordered space would produce a stunted and disorderly person; an open and orderly space would produce a fully-developed and orderly person.

There are consistencies between this discourse identified in the archive and the findings of other research. For example, Davison (2013) argues that in the nineteenth century, '[d]omesticity was a spatial as well as an ideological concept', and cites an 1815 housekeeping manual which links the 'well conducted' home with the notion of 'keeping everything in its proper place' (Taylor, cited in Davison 2013, p. 833). Freestone's (2000, p. 129) analysis of

the garden city movement in Australia draws attention to its focus on the geometry of subdivision — ‘the orderly geometric laying out of public and private spaces’ — rather than the construction of the actual homes. Similarly, Pugh (1976), Harris (1988), Howe (1988b, 1988a), Holmes (2000), Peel (2000), Arthurson (2008) and Troy (2013, 2009) all refer, in various ways, to the environmental determinism, concern for morality and desire for the orderly conduct of community life which informed the views of reformers of this era.

Slum abolition discourse took more than inanimate space as its object. The slum dweller was also defined, described and objectified by this discursive practice. Most prominently, speaking subjects identified the slum dweller as blameless. For example, a draft radio broadcast script explains slums in terms of noble and determined women waging a desperate and difficult war against ‘dirt’ in the face of almost overwhelming odds (Slum Abolition League 1942e, 1942g), and according to Barnett, a slum-dweller’s ‘only disability’ was ‘abject poverty’ (1940a). In 1941, the Joint Committee on Social Security argued that although it was ‘widely held’ that social services should be restricted to those who ‘deserved’ assistance, this view was misplaced: ‘For long it was held that poverty was the fault of the individual and was solely due to inefficiency, improvidence, dishonesty, drunkenness and the like. More modern opinion is that poverty is mostly not the fault of the individual but of the environment in which he lives’ (Joint Committee on Social Security 1941, p. 3).

However, forming part of the definition of the object of the slum dweller was the contrast with the ‘slum-minded’, people whose practice of domestic life had already been deformed by the effects of the slum environment. The difference was partially determined by a mathematical ratio — in Victoria, the accepted figures were that 95% of slum dwellers were merely poor, while 5% were truly ‘slum-minded’ (Slum Abolition League 1940a), while the Slum Abolition League (1941b, 1941d) in Tasmania put the proportion of ‘slum-minded’ at 10%, possibly drawing the figure from a UK report about slum clearance in Scotland (see 1936a). But the ‘poverty only’ status of the majority could also be identified through observation. One member of the League wrote: ‘I have been astonished, in visiting the homes, to note the cleanliness of the people in spite of the difficulties they have in keeping their homes and themselves clean’ (c. 1942a). The use of cleanliness as a general marker of success or failure in housing projects is evident in the English material collected in the League’s files: a review of the work of one Birmingham project identified ‘[t]he introduction of tidiness and cleanliness, and even of cheerfulness and graciousness, into the immediate surroundings’ as ‘one of the most valuable aspects of the work’ (1937b; also 1936b).

There is a point of ‘diffraction’ in the discourse at this point, meaning that there are elements which apparently exist side by side but which are contradictory (see p. 34 above). In this case,

the point where the discursive ‘either/or’ exists is in relation to the distinguishing characteristic of cleanliness. Within the discourse of slum abolition, cleanliness operates either as a personal characteristic, attached to the individual independently of their environment, or as something out of reach because of the nature of that environment. In an example of the latter subgroup, a council inspector described visiting a slum home — ‘there were children crawling about everywhere. They were filthy’ — accompanied by some aldermen; when they asked why the children were not bathed, the inspector said that he explained that there were no regulations requiring landlords to install baths (Slum Abolition League 1940e). An example of the former subgroup is in another account of a visit to the slums; it describes a kitchen which is ‘as clean as rough floors and falling plaster will allow’, in which a single kerosene tin on an open fireplace is used to heat water for both laundry and the occupants’ baths, the latter a ‘delicate operation [which] takes place in a tin dish so I am told’ (1942e, 1942g).

The two incompatible elements can exist as alternatives rather than contradictions because of the discursive practice of re-education. For the ‘slum-minded’, this re-education would operate as rehabilitation. The minutes of the Slum Abolition League’s (1941d) annual meeting in 1941 recorded the need for ‘the 10%’ to ‘go through a probationary area’ and a letter from the League to the Minister for Agriculture following that meeting recommended that in any rehousing program ‘provision be made for some intermediate period of education and training of those persons who are “slum minded”’ (1941b). Thus, at this point in the discourse, it becomes unimportant whether a person is dirty because of their personal failing or their environment; in both cases the environment will be remedied, and in the case of the ‘slum minded’, the personal failing will be undone through a process of ‘training’ in which the distortions imposed by the slum environment will be removed.

The process of producing and reproducing the discourse of slum abolition itself generated multiple subject positions in relation to the objects discussed above. For example, subjects could be positioned as the objective observer of slum houses, the good citizen created by the town-planned suburb or the benevolent helper re-educating the slum dweller. However, a particular, expert subject status was obtainable through the discursive practice of anti-slum activism. By personally observing and describing the objects of discourse through the practice of careful, independent and exhaustive investigation, activists were able to claim privileged access to knowledge.

### **The knowledge produced**

Discourse functions to order the dispersion of discursive events in ways that are coherent and make sense to subjects. In slum abolition discourse, for example, the object of the slum house is related to another object, the aspirational, planned estate. The estate cannot exist without

the slum house because the estate is the space in which the characteristics of the slum house will be rewritten and transformed. It provides an orderly solution for the disorder of the slums. The object of 'slum dweller' is related to the subject-position of 'good citizen' by a particular type of discursive practice — not the practice of slum abolition but a reinforcing practice of a particular mode of living. Through the operation of this practice, the object of the 'slum-dweller' is subjectified as the 'good citizen'. Virtuous slum-dwellers already have partial access to this subject-status through their diligent performance of tasks such as 'the weekly polishing of the shabby linoleum'. The 'slum-minded', whose kitchens contain 'a meal spread out in a sort of a way' and in whose homes '[d]irt is winning everywhere' (Slum Abolition League 1942e, 1942g), must acquire it through being modified by the transformative procedure of 'rehabilitation'.

By relating the elements to each other in particular ways, discourse allows subjects to 'know' certain things about those elements. In the discourse of slum abolition, then, it was 'known' that the slum home produced the slum occupant, that slum-dwellers could in general be absolved from blame for their condition and that their condition could be remedied by the provision of a different home. The claim that 'good housing conditions' created 'decent citizens' (Slum Abolition League 1940e) was produced by a discursive practice in which 'good' housing could be tightly defined, identified and controlled through the application of 'modern' town planning 'science'. Through this process, slum dwellers could become citizen-subjects, and their estate could become a community.

Slum abolition discourse was not the only discursive formation in operation. The efforts of advocates to reject the idea that 'slum-mindedness' was universal amongst slum-dwellers led to the existence of a counter-discourse in which slums were known differently. But slum abolition discourse was nonetheless influential. The Commonwealth Housing Commission's (1944, p. 67) report contained specific instructions about how to respond to people relocated from slums which were consistent with the position advanced by slum advocates. For example, officers working on estates 'should appreciate that amongst the fundamental needs are not only the good housing of the people, but, through this, a general re-education of the people to a fuller social life and a fuller exercise of the rights of citizenship'. Some families would need 'social re-education', with the 'measure of success' for this the 'steady improvement' of these families with regard to property care and rental payments.

The Commission's report can be read as a set of aspirational and politically impractical policies which were not implemented in full (see Troy 2009). However, it can also be read, in Foucauldian terms, as a systemic program — 'sets of calculated, reasoned prescriptions in terms of which institutions are meant to be reorganized [*sic*], spaces arranged, behaviours

regulated' (Foucault 1991 [1980], p. 80). Foucault argued that just because such programs were not put into practice 'in an integral manner', this did not invalidate them. The focus should not be on the difference 'between the purity of the ideal and the disorderly impurity of the real', but upon the 'different strategies which are mutually opposed, composed and superposed so as to produce permanent and solid effects which can perfectly well be understood in terms of their rationality, even though they don't conform to the initial programming' (Foucault 1991 [1980], pp. 80-81).

## **The successful applicant**

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### **Procedures of housing allocation**

The constraints which limited the output of the housing program after the war are discussed in Chapter 5. What is relevant here is that demand massively exceeded supply, which meant that a system for ordering access by people to houses had to also incorporate a system for giving some applicants priority over others. Allotment of homes was based upon 'the need of the individual', as determined against criteria agreed with the Commonwealth (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1945, pp. 14-15).

In policy, this 'need' was defined by the quality or size or distance from work of the applicant's existing housing and their capacity to afford appropriate housing in the private market, and then refined by family size and income (Adams 1947a, pp. 18-19).<sup>9</sup> In Tasmania, it was determined by a physical inspection of the applicant's current housing, followed by a series of procedures, carried out first by 'trained officers', then by a committee and finally by the members of the Bank's Board, to classify and rank applicants and distribute houses amongst them (p. 19). As described in the documents, the concept of 'need' was located within the individual's housing circumstances and disaggregated from more intrinsic personal qualities, consistent with the slum abolition discourse that had conditioned the establishment of the housing program.

However, the Agricultural Bank, which had statutory responsibility for the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, did incorporate into its allocation decisions a quality referred to as 'the personal factor', including whether an applicant's current housing situation was his [*sic*] own fault, through failure to pay rent or deliberate damage. The Bank claimed that 'relatively few' applicants were excluded on this basis (Adams 1947a, p. 19), but it is difficult to find

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<sup>9</sup> In addition, a tenant prepared to move from an under-occupied dwelling was given preference, and half the properties available had to be reserved at the outset for returning servicemen — although 'need' applied to this group as well (Adams 1947a, pp. 18, 20).



confirming evidence in the allotment schedules that survive in the archive. The sole explicit example of a reference to what might be ‘the personal factor’ is contained in a schedule dated 27 March 1953. The entry concerns a boilermaker, his wife and six children who were living in a four room ‘condemned house’. The form states: ‘Report in 1949 by Housing Officer indicates Applicant poor type. Children well-nourished but not over clean. W.O. [welfare officer] to watch’ (Office of the Minister for Housing 1953d). It is not clear whether this entry is the only example because the ‘personal factor’ was generally ignored in allocation decisions, or because applicants who were of ‘poor type’ were not usually recommended for housing, or because few people of ‘poor type’ actually applied.

However, the allotment schedules do contain multiple examples of people allocated housing in ‘hutments’. In 1946, Tasmania had passed the *Homes (Temporary Housing Accommodation) Act*. Under this legislation, people who were in ‘urgent need’ but who did not qualify for CSHA-funded properties were housed in relocated and converted military hutments on a temporary basis (Adams 1947a, p. 4; see also Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1947a, p. 9). The following year, the Bank took on a further group of hutments at the military camp in Brighton, and by 1948, ‘demand’ for temporary housing had grown to the point where the Bank had sought additional funds from Parliament to convert more hutments and improve the amenities in the existing ones (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1948, p. 11).

In 1949, the Bank announced that no further building of this kind would be undertaken — activities would now be ‘largely supervisory’ and it was likely that ‘the provision of dwellings for these classes of persons will in future be catered for under the Commonwealth and State Housing Agreement’ (Adams, Plummer & Veale 1950, p. 10). By 1954, however, the practice of temporary accommodation had returned in more solid form. The newly formed Housing Department acquired part of the Launceston migrant hostel for conversion for this purpose (Plummer 1954, p. 7). In 1955, some of the southern hutments were replaced with twelve ‘solidly constructed’ homes in Maria Street in Hobart (1955, p. 6). The Launceston hostel was still in use at the end of the 1950s, and the then Director of Housing indicated that even though seven of the flats were no longer habitable, the Department would continue to use the units as ‘emergency accommodation’ for families who did not qualify for permanent housing ‘for one reason or another’ (Duke 1959, pp. 5-6). It is rarely explicit just what characteristics rendered a household ‘unqualified’, but the later use that was made of the Maria Street homes (see p. 62 below) suggests that the families assigned to the various forms of temporary housing were those considered to have a ‘bad personal factor’.

## Defining the applicant

The discursive practice of housing allocation involved the application of a set of techniques and procedures which separated those seeking housing into 'qualified' and 'unqualified', and housed them accordingly. A particular object of discourse, the 'applicant', was formed out of this practice. It was an object delineated by the parameters of the category of 'need' and described on the allotment schedules according to a series of subheadings: file number, name, current address, age of the 'parents', 'size' of the 'family' (meaning the number and sex of the children), occupation, income (a column almost always left blank), present accommodation and 'remarks'. This last column contained a brief summary of the reasons why each individual applicant was in 'need'.<sup>10</sup>

Typical 'applicants', then, include a woman living with her six children in an old four roomed house 'in deplorable condition' which 'has been condemned', an engineer, his pregnant wife and their child living in one attic room with use of a sleep-out downstairs, a clerk boarding at one address while his wife and two children lived in one room with the 'use of conveniences' at another, and a family of seven living in a condemnable house in Hobart, who were finally allocated a new home in November 1953 after first applying in 1944 (Office of the Minister for Housing 1954b, 1954d, 1953e, 1956). A zinc worker was living with his wife, three children, his sister and nephew in an 'overcrowded, damp and unhealthy' dwelling in North Hobart, a 'deserted housewife' with five children was living in a Launceston cottage in 'appalling structural condition [which] should be condemned', and a war widow and four children were sharing three substandard and overcrowded rooms at Triabunna (1953b, 1955b). Another two households are described as living in converted stables and a labourer with a wife and four children as living in a 'canvas and paling structure', while a lorry driver with a wife and child was living in a building which was 'in danger of collapse' (1953c, 1954e, 1953a, 1955a).

The information contained on these schedules is the form in which applicants survive in the archive, and because of this, another essential quality of the 'applicant' described above is success. The schedules are silent in relation to those applicants who failed to be allocated a home at all, either permanent or temporary. Yet the discourse of housing allocation derived its legitimacy from the procedures which produced these schedules, procedures described by subjects in the archive in ways which emphasise their thoroughness, fairness and transparency, and the expertise and diligence of those administering them.

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<sup>10</sup> In my presentation of examples here, I have described the applicants in a depersonalised way, as a family configuration or an occupation, rather than as named individuals. I have done this to preserve confidentiality (Tasmania was and is a small community and the period in question is within living memory), but it is important to note that the way in which they are presented in the schedules does include the name of the head of the household. That is, the process of objectification represented by the schedules did not include stripping people of their individual identity.

However, as the chairman of the Bank told a parliamentary committee,  
no criteria can be expected to cover the multiplicity of cases which arise in its practical application. Rigid adherence to the formula could create injustices, but if it is borne in mind that the criteria is to be regarded as a guide, few difficulties should be experienced in applying it, even to a multiplicity of cases (Adams 1947a, p. 19).

Such capacity for discretion meant that the subjectivities available in relation to these practices — or, as Kendall and Wickham (1999, p. 27) put it, the ‘ways of acting or being that human beings can take up’ — could be assumed in various ways: sympathetically, sceptically, fairly, expertly, objectively. The ‘applicants’ preserved in the allotment schedules are governed by a series of procedures constituted by the individual interactions between those seeking housing and those providing it. Thus special consideration was given to a teacher and his family ‘owing to situation of home on river bank and fact that child was nearly drowned recently’ (Office of the Minister for Housing 1954a). And a family of six living in two rooms were not just overcrowded — it was ‘[m]orally wrong for children 15, 11, 7 and 2 years to share parents’ bedrooms’; my notes on this entry record that the word ‘morally’ is much fainter than the others, as if someone has sought to erase it (1953f), but a similar comment, unamended, is made concerning the application of a war widow with two children: ‘Morally wrong for 17 year boy to share bedroom with mother’ (1954c).

These examples suggest ways in which individual involvement at different levels of the process shaped how an applicant’s case was presented on the schedules. They also imply, given that subjects are ‘active in producing themselves as subjects in the sense of *subjected* to power’ (Kendall & Wickham 1999, p. 53, emphasis in original), the production of a subject-position of ‘the inspected applicant’. This form of the applicant is acted upon by a discursive practice designed to objectify — to define and describe the ‘successful’ applicant — but is contributing to the construction of that object by conveying, to the inspector, their own housing ‘need’. And within that process were various ‘ways of acting or being’, such as the deserving applicant, the helpless applicant or the ‘culpable’ applicant, responsible through personal failure for their own housing situation (Adams 1947a, p. 19).

### **Discursive adjustments**

Against the earlier discursive practice of slum abolition, the practice of housing allocation produced a discursive adjustment in the wider discourse of the tenant. This modification began at the point in the discourse at which the slum house and the slum dweller are related to each other. In the discourse specific to slum abolition, the former determined the qualities of the latter, and this meant that ‘need’ existed solely in relation to the physical environment of the individual. The discursive practice of housing allocation introduced the idea that an applicant could be in ‘need’ as a direct result of his [*sic*] own decision-making.

This discursive adjustment was produced by the material constraints under which the Agricultural Bank was operating. The slum abolition movement had envisaged the production of enough houses for all slum-dwellers but the discursive practice of post-war housing production could not achieve this level (see Chapter 5). Although the housing program existed in order to solve the housing problem, there were large numbers of people who were not being accommodated. The discursive practice of housing allocation provided the mechanism by which this apparent inconsistency could be rationalised. It established a series of fair and objective processes which allowed for the determination, not just of 'need', but of degrees of need. Thus the existence of people not yet being accommodated could be explained by their lesser degree of need, while those who were unable to be accommodated at all had only themselves (not the Bank) to blame.

## **The problem of the 'problem' tenant**

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### **The practice of housing welfare**

The Department's employment of 'welfare officers' was premised on the knowledge (discussed above) that there was a correct way to live within a home, and that some people did not know what it was. Precisely when these officers were first appointed is unclear from the files. There is a reference to a 'W.O.' on an allotment schedule from March 1953 (Office of the Minister for Housing 1953d), and an internal memo from May 1972 dates the first appointment to 'about 1954', but welfare officers were not mentioned in an annual report until 1962.<sup>11</sup> According to the 1972 memo (Housing Department 1972f), the original intent was that the officers would 'safeguard the Department's assets (i.e. the dwellings) and assist those in trouble by advising them what to do and where to go in times of need'. They would not, however, 'carry out strict welfare activities', and the role was explicitly non-professional as '[w]hat was required was not an imposing array of academic qualifications ... but rather a mature person, preferably with experience in family problems'.

'Welfare' for the Department had a specific and particular meaning, one evident in the way in which the Director's annual reports to Parliament discussed the topic of 'estate management'. The 1961 report, for example, stated that '[w]inning the co-operation of new occupiers and retaining the goodwill of old ones in such important matters as looking after the house and grounds, cultivating gardens, living in harmony with neighbours, and avoiding anti-social

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<sup>11</sup> A separate search of digitised Tasmanian newspapers located two advertisements, dated November 1954 and seeking applications for the position of Housing Department welfare officer in Launceston (see *Advocate* 27 November 1954, p. 22; *Mercury* 27 November 1954, p. 26), but nothing prior to this date.

behaviour are features vital to the successful management of housing estates'. This report noted with approval the 'vast majority' who were 'eager to make their homes, both internally and externally, as attractive as possible, and to fit themselves and their families into a contented and co-operative [sic] community' (Duke 1961, p. 8). The 1962 report presented estate management as the work of assisting occupants to settle in to what may be unfamiliar ways of living, given that '[m]any have not previously had an opportunity to live quietly in their own homes surrounded by adequate space for gardens and playing ground for young children'. This settling process, said the Director, was undertaken with the support of the Department's two welfare officers, who were

always available to assist when required. ... The results of their efforts cannot be statistically recorded because so many intangibles are involved, but I am satisfied that the encouragement they give, the advice offered and the assistance rendered in difficult times is appreciated by the great majority with whom they come into contact (1962, p. 11).

In 1963, the Director said that the officers' duties included assisting 'the less fortunate occupiers of Departmental homes' by providing advice, arranging for Social Services Department workers to call or appealing to charities for help with clothing and so on. They also gave 'instruction' in home management and the use of white goods, and 'advice and all possible help' to families affected by bereavement or serious illness. The Director emphasised their 'tact and sympathetic understanding' (Duke 1963, p. 9). In 1964, he reported that the employment of a further two officers had allowed for 'more intensive supervision', including a general survey which led to 'an intensive campaign in some cases to compel occupiers to clean up their dwellings and grounds' (Duke 1964, p. 9).

These accounts suggest that the discursive practice of housing 'welfare' was domestic in scale. The focus was on supervising occupants' methods of living within their homes, families and communities, and the procedures used consisted of the encouragement and compulsion of particular forms of normative activity, such as gardening (see Chapter 4). This home-centred 'welfare' practice was distinctly non-professional in character and overtly gendered. In 1974 the Director of Housing described the ideal welfare officer as 'a mature woman who had had some experience in these matters [budgeting, household management and property care]' (Housing Department 1974e). And although in 1962 an earlier Director had described the welfare officers as 'trained in special fields and with experience of life and home management' (Duke 1962, p. 11), in general, the documents indicate that welfare officers did not have, and were not intended to have, formal or academic qualifications.

### **The practice of social welfare**

The welfare officers' efforts were directed at both of the groups of occupants defined by the discursive practice of housing allocation. That is, they assisted occupants who lived on the

Department's 'standard' estates and those who lived in the homes purposefully built as successors to the post-war hutments. These homes were used not just for applicants deemed initially 'unsuitable' for standard housing, but also functioned as a means of management of those occupants whose 'unsuitability' only became evident after they were accommodated. 'Misfits' were inevitable anywhere, wrote the Director in his 1962 annual report, but for the 'small minority who prove incapable of making the necessary adjustments to render themselves truly acceptable members of a community', the solution of 'last resort' was to 'transfer the difficult ones to an environment more suitable to their tastes and inclinations' (Duke 1962, p. 11). This 'environment' was probably Austral Place (see Map 2 on p. 7 above), which, like Maria Street (see p. 57 above), functioned as a replacement for the temporary hutments (see Housing Department 1972j).

The Department's attitude to Austral Place and Maria Street was ambivalent. In the 1950s, it faced pressure to respond more promptly to the needs of families being evicted from their existing accommodation due to the 'liberalising' of tenancy legislation (Driscoll, Plummer & Veale 1953a, p. 8) and the redevelopment of inner-city residential areas for commercial use (Plummer 1955, p. 5). An interdepartmental conference held in August 1959 between the Police, Social Services and Housing Departments concluded (according to a memo from the Director of Social Services to his Minister) that the housing of most evicted families was within the capacity of the Housing Department, 'given sufficient time'. The real problem was 'those families with socially inadequate parents who can be expected to be unsatisfactory as tenants both in respect of rental payments and care of properties'. According to the memo, the Housing Department took the position 'that it is not consistent with its functions that it should undertake to house such families, though at times it has done so' (Housing Department 1959b).

The conference decided to formalise existing practice in relation to such families, meaning that they would continue to be housed in Austral Place or Maria Street. The houses in the latter were owned by the Housing Department but controlled by the Department of Social Services, and the conference agreed that these would continue to operate 'approximately' as a housing rehabilitation centre for 'socially inadequate families'. The Director of Social Services noted:

It is, of course, to be expected that this Department [i.e. the Social Services Department] will often experience difficulty in collecting rents, and losses are inevitable, and there will also be expense because of damage to the houses. However, this is a more economical and, in many cases, a more socially desirable alternative than accepting the children as wards of the State, as is often necessary eventually in these cases. It is essential for the success of this proposal that there should be an outlet from this Department's homes at the stage where a family has improved its attitude and circumstances. It is apparent from an examination of those families now in the cottages controlled by this Department, that in some cases there is an improvement, either directly in the attitudes and ambitions of the

family, or indirectly with the passage of time as the children grow up and leave home. Where there is such an improvement, it is necessary that the family concerned should move on from Maria Street and the Housing Department is prepared to co-operate where possible in this respect (Housing Department 1959b).

The Department saw areas like Maria Street and Austral Place as contained spaces in which problem families could be 'controlled' (Housing Department 1959c) and services were available, but which were still 'sufficiently isolated from good-standard housing areas' (1960c). The effect of this is to further demarcate the boundaries between 'slum dweller' and 'slum-minded', 'worthy' and 'culpable'. In 1961, for example, the Director of Housing informed the Director of Social Welfare that 'problem' families should not be accommodated 'in normal subdivisions while applicants of worth require re-housing' (1961b). The documents also contain repeated references to the Department's concern for its other, 'normal' tenants and for the reputation of its estates. One officer commented that '[o]ne "bad" house in a street is enough to give the street a poor name' (1969b). Another cautioned that if 'socially inadequate' families were accommodated on existing subdivisions, 'the Department could expect to receive many complaints from the better class of people especially as they are mostly purchasers' (1969d). The Department's expressed view was that

it should administer its functions with the least possible impact on State revenue and that it should not be charged with providing accommodation for families, the parents of which are proved delinquents, so far as meeting financial obligations are concerned and whose record in respect of care and maintenance of property is unsatisfactory (1959c).

The practice being asserted by the Department throughout the documents from this era then is that 'problem' families, though real and worrying, were not its concern. As speaking subject, the Department repeatedly delineated its own practice of housing welfare from the practice of social welfare carried out by the Social Services Department (known from September 1961 as the Social Welfare Department). In 1970, the Minister for Housing wrote to the Minister for Social Welfare regarding the 'housing of necessitous families', noting that there were 'a number of families ... with which my Department are persevering who would be much better catered for by your Department' (Housing Department 1970c). The following year, the Director of Housing noted that the growing numbers of 'widows, deserted wives and socially inadequate families' living in the Department's homes was involving the Department

more and more ... with matters which are of a purely social welfare nature. Adequate supervision of the social needs of the above groups is more properly a function of a welfare authority than a housing authority. The need to undertake intensive social work with these types of family units, if they are to have any chance of success in their new housing, is beyond the present welfare facilities of this Department (Allwinton 1971, p. 15).

Consequently, ‘problem’ families were discursively written out of Departmental practice by the denial not just of their ‘worth’ but of any Departmental obligation owed to them. Those ‘hopeless cases’ already accommodated (Duke 1965, p. 6) would be removed from the Department’s estates and instead placed in special areas which, as a matter of preference, would be overseen not by the Housing Department but by the Social Welfare Department (Housing Department 1969h). Through this, and through the associated practice of housing allocation discussed above, the way in which public housing could be ordered and ‘known’ was being modified. Rather than a mechanism by which good citizens could be created, it was increasingly understood and used as a mechanism by which people who were already good citizens could be rewarded.

### **Housing, welfare and the problem tenant**

#### **The growing ‘problem’**

But despite the Department’s efforts to discursively ‘define out’ the ‘problem’ family from its field of responsibility and expertise, such families continued to intrude. There was considerable political anxiety about the issue, centring in particular on the question of children’s welfare. For example, one Independent member of the Legislative Council<sup>12</sup> wrote to the acting Premier of the day stating, ‘I know some of these families are problem families but the children cannot be blamed for their parents [*sic*] misdeeds, and if the State is eventually forced to look after the children it would be more costly to the State than endeavouring to find accommodation for them’ (Housing Department 1959a).

The documents also suggest that the scale of the problem was being monitored and quantified, despite the disavowal of responsibility. The Housing, Social Welfare and Police Department memo of 1959 pointed out that the eleven cottages available at Maria Street were not enough — the Housing Department’s waiting list currently included 29 applicants with ‘bad personal factors’, 12 of them under threat of eviction; there were also 15 ‘unsuitable’ applicants ‘of high priority need’ in Launceston and all three departments knew of ‘other socially inadequate families for whom provision similar to that suggested here, would be valuable’ (Housing Department 1959b). Ten years later, a definite proportion of Housing Department occupants were in the ‘problem’ category, with the Director of Housing stating that eight out of ten families were ‘good occupiers’, with about one in four of the remaining two in ten (i.e. 5%) posing ‘fairly serious problems’, although only 1% of the total ‘would represent the type of case with which we cannot deal’ (1970b).

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<sup>12</sup> Tasmania’s upper house; the lower house is the House of Assembly.



In 1969 a minority Liberal Government was elected, the first non-Labor Government in Tasmania for 35 years, and in July, the new Minister ordered an easing of the Department's allotment policy. The Director noted the instruction, but sought 'to bring to [the Minister's] attention' the effects of this change, specifically the increased costs the Department (and the State Budget) would have to bear, the increased incidence of 'social problems' and complaints, extended waiting times for 'more worthy applicants', the extension of assistance to 'applicants with consistent police records and whose credit worthiness is extremely doubtful', and long-term damage to the reputation of the Department's estates (Housing Department 1969e). Following a further, specific instruction to house a family previously evicted by the Department, the Director wrote to the Minister to declare that the precedent so created would mean that previous policy would be 'cancelled' and that '[i]n future, the Department will approve applications from known bad payers, grant preferential treatment to all eviction cases regardless of circumstances, and receive and record applications from previous clients who owe the Department money. It would be appreciated if you could confirm that these policies are approved by you' (1969c). This second memo is dated 18 July. There is a handwritten comment at the foot: 'No reply @ 31/7'.

When the Liberal Government lost power three years later, the Department reverted to its previous, 'wait-your-turn' approach to allotment, although, the Director noted, 'genuine' cases of hardship could be assisted earlier, especially if they arose from poor housing conditions (Allwinton 1972, p. 3). In a memo to the Minister for Housing in September 1973, the Director referred to the 1969 policy change as having 'forced' the Department to accommodate 'many' unsuitable applicants, included people the Department had previously evicted for 'non-performance in relation to minimum behaviour and rent payments'. In order to cope with 'the ever-increasing number of cases', the Department had taken to spot-purchasing properties in inner metropolitan areas, away from its estates, to be used in the short term as accommodation for 'many of the difficult applicants we are forced to deal with', and in the long-term, to provide land for future redevelopment (Housing Department 1973h).<sup>13</sup>

The Liberal Government of 1969-1972 appears to offer an identifiable turning point, in which an external intervention caused a significant reconfiguration in the relationship between the Department as speaking subject and the problem family as discursive object. But my reading of the totality of the documents is that things were more discursively complex. Certainly from the early 1970s the Department in general and the Director in particular were more engaged in

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<sup>13</sup> There are some interesting nuances in the way in which the Department's concerns about the effect of non-rehabilitated, 'problem' tenants on the 'good' occupants living in its standard housing estates discursively positioned the more geographically distant 'estate' in relation to 'welfare' locations in closer proximity to services and the metropolitan centre.

the discursive practice of defining the 'problem family' as an object of discourse, but my reading of this is that rather than representing a reconfiguration of the relationship between the Department and these occupants, it instead should be understood as part of the Department's efforts to have its claim that 'problem' families were not its problem accepted in practice as well as in policy. By their nature, these efforts can be located within the discursive realm.

#### The welfare response

As already suggested, 'housing', as opposed to 'social', welfare operated at a domestic, day-to-day level. The focus was upon occupants' performance of particular activities, principally housekeeping, parenting and cleaning. This is evident from the monthly reports of the Department's welfare officers. For example, one officer explained that tenants were 'happy to receive advice or a practical demonstration on how to improve', reported assisting 'some regular cases' with their cleaning, and described a competition 'conducted within one problem family for the child making the greatest effort to clean a section of the home. A small prize was given and the results were very pleasing' (Housing Department 1965i, 1965n, 1965t). Another noted with approval the actions of a Maria Street tenant, who had 'actually put a fence around the front of the home and intends making a larger garden' and who had 'also built on a bedroom to separate the sexes', and reported that a 'full inspection' of tenants at Austral Place identified two families who 'maintain high enough standards' to be rehoused elsewhere (1965r, 1966r).

The standard required by the welfare officers included both the absence of dirt and the presence of order and method, such as in this extract from October 1965:

There are not very many really dirty homes. Some are untidy, mainly caused from lack of furniture and nowhere to put clothe[sic] etc. away. There are several homes where the tenant has a low standard and to them the house is clean. They scrub and polish and to the best of their ability try to clean their homes up. This type of tenant is liable to forget to do in the corners, under the beds etc. but with a little bit of tact and advice they gradually learn to improve (Housing Department 1965o).

The same officer elsewhere observed that the 'very untidy ones' often found it hard to change: 'they can be clean yet have clothes etc. lying all over the place and think nothing of it' (1965h). Another welfare officer reported that one home which had been visited the previous month and had been 'a mess' had since 'been cleaned right through. The whole family had set to, because they realized [sic] I had been disappointed on the previous visit. They even had lino on some of the floors and felt they were living in the lap of luxury' (1966f).

Yet even though the practice of 'housing welfare' was distinguished from the practice of 'social welfare' by its lack of professional standing and its focus on housekeeping standards, there is evidence in the files that the Department's welfare officers did identify with and consider

themselves part of the professional welfare community. They routinely attended professional development activities (for example Housing Department 1971c, 1972h) and were ‘always present’ at the monthly meetings of the Tasmanian Association of Social Welfare, where they took upon themselves the role of speaking for the Department (see 1971a, 1971b, 1972i, 1972j).

In 1976, as part of an internal review of their role, welfare officers complained that their position within the Department’s structure suggested that their professional expertise and ‘the distinct and specialized [*sic*]’ nature of their work was insufficiently recognised (Housing Department 1976f; also 1976b, 1976c), and that their experience was in fact ‘much wider’ than that of social workers involved in other areas of government, such as those of the Social Welfare Department (1976d; also 1972d). This assertion of professionalism, while increasingly part of the way in which the welfare officers created themselves as subjects, was incompatible with the Department’s assertion of housing-specific welfare work as a non-professional and non-rehabilitative activity, set in contrast to ‘professional’ social work.

There are signs within the documents that this incompatibility was consciously noted. In May 1972, a discussion paper on welfare matters within the Department observed that it had, ‘despite internal feelings to the contrary’, maintained the non-professional approach, but expressed concern that the ‘excellent connections’ established between the welfare officers and other government agencies and private welfare organisations had led to those organisations considering housing welfare officers to have a professional role (Housing Department 1972f). Four years later, the Director of Housing stated that the Department’s welfare officers ‘have developed an expertise which is being handed along to new incumbents’ but stressed that the expertise was more one of empathy and knowledge of other sources of support than of professional practice. He noted that sometimes they ‘want to take on the role of welfare officer as per Social Welfare Department and get involved with case histories and so on’, but argued that this was not appropriate (1976c, 1977b).

The first part of the practice described above — the welfare officers’ focus on the efforts made by tenants to meet a particular standard of cleanliness and order — is generally consistent with the examples of discursive practice explored earlier in this chapter. That is, the ‘proper’ way of living in a house extends to cleaning under the beds, some tenants do not know how to do this, and the role of a (housing) welfare officer is to show them. The relations evident within the second part of the practice — the welfare officer as professional subject, as colleague and expert — are not consistent with this, and indeed, could endanger that part of the Department’s discourse that insisted that real ‘welfare’ cases were the responsibility of the Social Welfare Department. The conflict, however, did not change the overarching discursive

practice of the Department because there was material available in the discourse that made for a resolution of sorts.

The Director stated in his summary of the 1976 review that the Department did not need ‘a theoretical rule book type person — we need people who are sympathetic, warm, strong when necessary, soft when required, compassionate, and who know where special forms of assistance can be obtained’ (Housing Department 1977b). According to copies of the welfare officers’ position description, no formal qualifications were required; the only ‘essential’ requirement was ‘welfare knowledge’, while the ‘capacity to evaluate information, prepare reports, advise and assist occupants with social and financial problems’ was only ‘desirable’ (1970d; Department of Housing and Construction 1981l).<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, because the officers were not professional — however much they may have identified with the profession — another form of subjectivity was available to them and to the Department, one characterised by enthusiasm and humanity. An example of it is found in the statement of the Director that welfare officers did at times ‘tend to become involved in certain cases — but this is human nature’ (Housing Department 1977b). Essentially, welfare officers could assert claims to professional expertise, and engage in a practice of the self which was professionalising, but this did not threaten the Department’s discourse of the tenant, because within that discourse, welfare officers acted in this way not because they were professionals or because their work was professional, but because of their personal connection to their work. And, therefore, the discursive practice of Housing Department ‘welfare’ could operate not simply as a means of ordering and regulating occupants and estates. It could also, as an explicitly and distinctly non-professional activity, be deployed by the Department as a speaking subject to define the boundaries of its own field of responsibility and deflect the political pressures that threatened those boundaries.

## Responding to the problem tenant

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### Strategy I: defining the object

The discursive practice which defined and produced the ‘problem’ family was not unique to Tasmania, but it was appropriated by discursive subjects there, and reproduced within the specific and situated context of Tasmanian political debate. One example of it is the corralling of certain households in particular streets or areas or other special accommodation, discussed above. Other examples were a set of specific procedures and techniques which defined and

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<sup>14</sup> At some point between 1970 and 1981, the requirement that welfare officers be ‘of mature age’ was removed.

described the ‘problem family’ as an object of discourse, and a further set of procedures which identified and labelled certain households as meeting this definition, thereby assigning them to the corresponding subject position of ‘problem family’, to which the governmental technique of ‘rehabilitation’ could be applied.

In the archive, the initial focus is on the facets of the ‘problem family’ which directly affected a housing authority — that is, the irregular payment of rent and the greater need for repairs and maintenance which were the specific costs of accommodating them (Housing Department 1969f, 1969c). Other characteristics are provided incidentally and in generalised terms (see 1961a, c. 1969, 1969h, 1970b; 1972g for examples). However, in 1973, an interdepartmental committee, referred to as the Social Environment Committee (SEC) and chaired by the Director of Housing, was established to consider the ‘problem’ of problem families. As part of its deliberations it developed a systematic definition of the problem family as one characterised by ‘adverse’ contact with statutory or voluntary organisations in the areas of education, mental or public health, child welfare, family assistance, social rehabilitation and law enforcement; in which the parents could not maintain ‘reasonable’ housing due to failing to pay rent, damaging property or annoying neighbours; and where ‘the number and/or circumstances of dependent children require special consideration’ (1974b).

In addition to a formal definition, the SEC also pursued a more systematic way of identifying, describing and counting those individual families which met the definition. In earlier examples (Housing Department c. 1969, 1969g), information about individual problem ‘cases’ appears to have been collated to counter political pressure to reverse specific allotment or eviction decisions. The SEC, however, set out to deliberately identify the specific families posing the ‘worst’ problems to the system as a whole. A subcommittee was formed to develop a comprehensive schedule of families ‘with multi-agency involvement’ (1973j).<sup>15</sup> A colloquial working definition was adopted for the purposes of obtaining information for inclusion in the schedule, with a later account reporting that ‘[i]t was decided to use the term “no-hoper” in referring the question to staff, in the belief that the officers concerned with the day-to-day contact with these families, would be precisely aware of the sort of problems to be considered in this context’ (1973c).

The nature and cumulative effect of the schedule, not just of the information collected, but of the discursive practice which produced it, can be seen from the following entry.

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<sup>15</sup> The nature of this exercise involved the identification of families by name. The Mental Health Commission representative on the committee subsequently asked that all names be deleted from the schedule (Housing Department 1973a), and this was agreed to, but appears to have been implemented imperfectly given what survives in the file. The reproduced entry in Table 3.1 has been edited to remove the names of individuals.

**Table 3.1: Extract from schedule of problem families (Housing Department 1973d)**

Name	Address	Housing	Police	Education	Probation	Mental Health	Social Welfare
Mrs [—] 5 children? Widow's Pension	3 Maria Street, New Town	Widow, low IQ, dirty, unable to care for property, constant arrears problem.	Is not considered a problem to the Police although there have been occasional reports of domestic arguments. No record.	Widow — 2 children. [B—] at New Town High — approved for loan issue supplies; [R—] at Talire. Both have been under notice for non-attendance, [R—] 22.7.70 and [B—] 18.7.71.	—	—	Most of this family have been Wards of the State and the home is at present being visited by a Child Welfare Officer. A daughter is in receipt of a Single Mother's Allowance.

Note: 'Talire' presumably refers to the Talire School for Mentally Disabled Children, which operated in Tasmania between 1950 and c. 1980.

As this example indicates, this is a practice composed of the keeping and collating of records. It objectifies an individual by reducing their circumstances to a set of personal characteristics and interactions with services, and then, by placing that individual on a schedule with other, similarly formatted information about other individuals, establishes them as a 'type'. Once a 'type' is identified, it can become a discursive object in its own right — 'the problem family'. By setting out to identify the 'worst' of the type, the schedule also represents a definitive and bounded statement of the problem.

There is congruence between this and wider discursive currents. One of the members of the SEC was Dr Eric Cunningham Dax, a senior mental health clinician and coordinator of community mental health services in Tasmania. As part of these latter roles, Dax was involved in research on the 'social inadequacy of some Tasmanian families', and his published articles (Dax & Hagger 1977; Hagger & Dax 1977) are themselves an expression of the discursive practice of another kind of record-keeping, specifically the use of 'family trees as visible records to illustrate the general pattern of social pathology' (Housing Department 1973f). And a local general practitioner, Dr Gerard Flaherty, who supported the Housing Department's view that the Department's 'welfare' responsibilities should be passed to the Social Welfare Department (see 1977c, 1977d), had in 1976 authored a paper in *Australian Family Physician* on research he had conducted to trace the genealogical history of one Tasmanian 'problem family' in his practice, 'a hopeless, shiftless and drunken brood, reproducing generation by generation another set of the same type' (Flaherty 1976, p. 707).

The papers by both Dax and Flaherty and the approach being taken by the SEC fit within a wider discourse which discussed 'problem families' in terms of intergenerational, hereditary dysfunction — a discourse which also informed, though not exclusively, an emerging and self-consciously 'new' way of practising social welfare. According to Crisp (2000, p. 186), this

period was marked by ‘a fundamental shift in [social] policy emphasis from remedial assistance to social planning ... [leading] to a backlash against casework and a need to ensure that social work services generally were both effective and efficient’. There are references in the documents to research being undertaken by professional bodies into the duties, training levels and capacities of social workers in Australia (see Housing Department 1974g, 1974d).

The new approach was encapsulated by the work of the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Melbourne, discussion of which amounts almost to hagiography in at least some of the documents — in an otherwise scathing critique of social and community services, Jamrozik (1974, p. 9) endorsed the Brotherhood’s ‘Family Centre Project’, and Hagger and Dax (1977, p. 121) describe it as the ‘most outstanding example’ in Australia of a program directed at assisted ‘multi-problem’ families specifically. The Family Centre was working with 60 families to support them to ‘learn to improve their own condition, and achieve a degree of community responsibility and participation’ (Housing Department 1973i). Benn (1975, p. 2) presented the project as a deliberately experimental and counter-orthodox approach, arising from a conscious decision to promote empowerment, self-help and a structurally-oriented approach to poverty over the standard casework model of intervention in the lives of poor families, and a desire to test the hypothesis that poverty was caused by society, not individual failure.

The Family Centre Project was considered relevant to the work of the SEC, with the Brotherhood’s executive director, David Scott, attending a meeting to provide information about it (Housing Department 1973i, 1973k, 1974b). According to the minutes of the meeting, Scott had ‘quoted Ilyich [*sic*]<sup>16</sup> — “too many professionals create more dependant people” and stressed the need for encouragement to improve their own condition, and achieve a degree of community responsibility and participation’ (1973i). According to a later account, the Family Centre’s success rested in good part on the fact that it ‘rode into prominence on the crest of a wave’; the wave in question was the election of the Whitlam government, an event associated with an atmosphere of ‘abundant ... reformism’ and, more practically, with the provision of funds ‘via Professor Henderson and the Poverty Inquiry’ for one of the project’s key components, the provision of a guaranteed minimum income to participants (Liffman 1987, p. 20).

The lasting influence of the Henderson Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1975) inquiry in shaping Australian public housing policy from the mid-1970s onwards has been noted in the literature (see for example Caulfield 2000, p. 102; Schindeler 2007, p. 92) — especially the

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<sup>16</sup> This is presumably a reference to Ivan Illich (1926-2002), who argued that the expansion and dominance of the professions ‘disabled’ citizens by commodifying human experiences into ‘needs’ which could only be met through professional intervention.

famous finding that the ‘the great majority of Housing Commission [sic] tenants are not poor’ (Commission of Inquiry into Poverty 1975, p. 303). Curiously, despite this and the connection discussed above, there is limited information about that inquiry in the archive. The inquiry certainly had an influence on the housing research program undertaken by the Southern Metropolitan Planning Authority (SMPA): in the 1970s and 1980s its researchers drew upon the findings of the Henderson inquiry and other related research to draw attention to the link between household income and housing outcomes (Tanner 1979, p. 1; Bound & Tickner 1980, pp. 1, 3, 5; Nolan 1980, p. 2; Southern Metropolitan Master Planning Authority 1980a, pp. 1, 7; 1980b, p. 3; Tickner 1980a, p. 1), and particularly on the inquiry’s concept of a ‘poverty line’ (Tickner 1981, p. 6). But the Department’s own file on the inquiry is a slender one. It declined to make a submission, on the basis that although it was

very willing to cooperate in any way possible ... the matter of poverty in the community only impinges on the main stream [sic] of our activity in a very indirect manner. As a general rule we deal with some of the effects of poverty and know little of the causes of this state, nor of the desirable methods of alleviation (Housing Department 1973n).

## **Strategy 2: governing the estate**

Particularly from the 1970s, the Department explicitly connected ‘problem’ families with the ‘alarming increase’ in single parent households (referred to at the time as ‘deserted wives’). This increase, it reported, was leading to an increased requirement for welfare staff to become engaged with ‘moral and behavioural problems’, child neglect, and other ‘results of desertions and divorces’ (Housing Department 1974e, 1974f). At a seminar organised by the Department in 1974 (see Appendix), the Department’s coordination officer, JH Thureau (1974, p. 2), had identified rising demand from old age pensioners and single parents as a serious problem because of the needs of both these groups for ‘specially designed housing’ and the risk of ‘social difficulties’ emerging. But he later explicitly excluded age pensioners from his discussion of appropriate housing for ‘problem’ tenants (p. 7), suggesting that his reference to ‘social difficulties’ was intended to apply only to single parents. These difficulties were caused, he said, by ‘a very real behavioural problem’, the nature of which was implied rather than stated directly: ‘The need for security often leads women in this group toward behaviour which results in difficulties with neighbours, police and the Department. Every care must be taken to ensure that these women are protected from the activities of those who would take advantage of their situation’ (p. 3).

The welfare officers’ reports from the previous decade contain a number of accounts of attempts to ‘manage’ the impact of specific ‘problem’ families on Housing Department estates, including ‘deserted wives’. For example, the ‘morals’ of two Ulverstone women generated complaints from ‘resentful’ neighbours (Housing Department 1966i), and West Ulverstone is identified in another report as ‘our most difficult [estate], with problems of almost every



description' including three deserted wives newly housed in the area, one of whom 'will require constant supervision as she has not even the remotest idea of cleanliness' (1968f). Another example illustrates the difficulty of dealing with 'problem' tenants in blocks of flats, as in the case of 'several unpleasant episodes' involving an alcoholic which would require the welfare officer to 'keep a watch on the situation as the [other] tenants are too close to put up with the behaviour of two weeks ago' (1967d).

Like other members of the Department, the welfare officers were conscious of the risk of complaints from neighbours if 'problem' tenants were accommodated within 'normal' subdivisions (Housing Department 1966i, 1966o, 1968o, 1968f, 1968p, 1968e, 1968m). Following the death of one of the parents in one 'problem' family, the welfare officer reported that 'the morality in this home has declined and young people are reputed to be encouraged to visit the home where they are taught immoral practices' (1968p; also 1966f, 1967e, 1968g). When this and another nearby problem family ultimately vacated their homes, the same welfare officer reported that the neighbours 'have pleaded that good type tenants be allocated these homes. They feel that they have been most tolerant' (1968i). Another report refers to an application inspection carried out on 'a large family, living in an isolated area, who are to be evicted [by their landlord]'. The officer reports that, despite '[c]onsiderable investigation' and 'discussion' with the family, she ultimately recommended against them, on the basis that '[o]ther tenants in Department homes need consideration as to the type of neighbours housed, and families always used to living in the bush are rarely happy in town areas' (1968b).<sup>17</sup> According to the Director of Housing, the practice of spot-purchasing properties specifically for use by problem occupants generated 'rumblings of community discontent and resentment' which could be expected to continue, 'especially if we are forced [by declining availability] to buy in better class, private areas' (1973h).

These examples raise issues with the intrusion of the object of the 'problem family', once confined to specific, named places like Austral Place and Maria Street, into the previously protected space of 'the estate'. The object itself was consistent with earlier accounts of the 'problem family', with an added, or at least more emphasised, facet of 'immorality'. But its presence in a different discursive location — 'the estate' — involves a partial reconfiguration of the relations between this object and discursive subjects.

To begin with, the work of defining the problem family 'object' is taking place at the level of the estate — within the lived experience of neighbours and the day-to-day practice of the welfare officer — rather than at the level of objective research or bureaucratic endeavour.

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<sup>17</sup> References in later reports indicate that this decision was reversed and the family was housed (Housing Department 1968o, 1968m, 1969a).

That is, the estate itself functions as the institutional site which gives the discourse of estate management its legitimacy and point of application (Foucault 2002 [1972], p. 56).

This means that the array of subject-positions available in relation to the problem family 'object' is also determined by the relation between subjects and the estate itself. Non-problem families occupied, relative to problem families, the subject position of 'neighbour', but this position is defined in relation to the estate — the 'neighbour' is a subject with certain privileges derived from a legitimate, probably propertied, position within the estate. Similarly, although the relation between the subject-function of 'neighbour' and the problem family might be constituted by tolerance, complaint or silence, it is conditioned by the relationship between the tenant and the estate, which is one of illegitimacy — the problem tenant is a corrupting and intrusive influence, a threat not just to the house but also to the reputation of the estate as a collection of houses and to those who live in them. The subject-position of legitimate tenant is available only in absentia — the problem tenant can best serve the estate by moving on.

The relationship of welfare officer to both neighbour and problem tenant subjects is similarly conditioned by the officers' own relationship to the estate. This is one of guardianship — the role of the welfare officer is to safeguard the estate, its assets and its reputation, and therefore the subject positions that are available to the welfare officer are constrained by this. A welfare officer can be, for example, protective of the neighbour subject, but not of the tenant subject. For example, one of the welfare officers provided an account of her visit to Cygnet, a small hamlet south of Hobart, where she found one home under the care of a housekeeper

who could not even tell me how many children she was looking after. There are broken windows, dirty floors and an incredibly [sic] dirty stove, etc. The house-keeper told me she only started work there in the weekend when the eldest daughter aged 15 had gone to hospital to have a baby. I was told that the father is an elderly mentally retarded person. As this family is also in arrears, I think the Department will have no other alternative but to evict this family. Twelve months ago this home and the garden area were in excellent order when the occupants were [a different] family (Housing Department 1968r).

In this case, there are a number of issues presented which would even at that time been considered 'welfare' problems. The SEC's schedule of 'no-hopers' describes a number of families with similar characteristics and identifies them as therefore under the aegis of a range of agencies. But the response here is a straightforward recommendation to evict. The erasure of the family's intrusion into previously well-kept and unproblematic Departmental territory is the issue for this welfare officer, not the question of rehabilitation.

### Strategy 3: rehabilitating the subject

According to O'Farrell (2005, p. 113), the subject is not a static 'thing' — rather, an individual may take up various forms of subjectivity. For the problem family subject, many of these forms are hinted at in the discussion above — 'the no-hoper', for example, denotes not just a way of speaking about problem families (as an object of discourse) but also makes available a way of acting within the discourse for a problem family subject. Others are discussed below.

One of the main discursive determinants of the ways in which the problem family subject could form and reform was the procedure of 'rehabilitation'. Rehabilitation in this context was conceived in terms of 'treatment' (Housing Department 1972e, 1973j) and 'training' (1972g). It would require 'intensive social work' (1970a), 'close social supervision' (1973j), family 'counselling' (1972b) and 'constant attention which may be extended for some years' (1972f). In one account, the 'treatment' was described as the 'individual reeducation [sic] of these families in laying out their money, managing the home, child care, official obligations, marriage guidance, social relations and other day to day requirements' (1974b). Another document, anonymous, though from similar attributed comments in other documents probably authored by the Director of Housing, suggested that the role of social workers in these cases could extend even to 'supervising subsequent marriages etc. within the family' (1973b). The SEC proposed the establishment of a Housing Rehabilitation Board to provide this rehabilitation in a coordinated way, but was unsuccessful in obtaining Cabinet approval (1972c, 1973j, 1974b). As had the 1940s anti-slum campaigners, the SEC also discussed the need to provide formalised 'education' on household management, such as through 'experimental training houses' (1973e), in order that practical skills could be 'demonstrated' to families (1974c).

Even the counter-cultural Family Centre Project incorporated a rehabilitative element. In refuting the accusation that collections of poor people lead directly to the creation of 'slums', Benn (1975, p. 21) placed discursive emphasis on cleanliness, claiming that when people had 'decent facilities and conditions', their housekeeping was 'meticulous'. She stressed 'the importance of modelling behaviour... if a family is placed in a neighbourhood of good housekeepers who are willing to each share their skills, it will not be long before they are emulating the behaviour which surrounds them'. The Brotherhood had obtained 'encouraging results' from the use of a 'modelling system' within the Family Centre to 'teach' people 'about hygiene and living standards'.

The discursive relations which produced the claim that rehabilitation would solve the problem of the problem family rendered it discursively difficult to advance an alternative claim. At the 1974 Departmental seminar, the keynote speaker, Michael Jones (1974, pp. 6-7), a Canberra

academic, argued in favour of a separate, specialist agency (not the state housing authority) to manage ‘problem’ tenants through a system of rental guarantees. Such an approach would ensure that ‘problem’ families were housed, and would be an inexpensive alternative to the massive public expenditure which would be otherwise required to keep such families ‘functioning’. However, Jones emphasised this was to achieve containment of the problem rather than rehabilitation — these households would live in separate areas and the administering authority ‘would not need to be staffed by expensive professionals’ because trying to change tenants’ behaviour was ‘a waste of time. Rather they would be engaged in a dollars and cents economy program to pre-empt this group from costing the society far more than just free rent’ (pp. 7-8). His views were almost immediately refuted by Thureau (1974, pp. 4-5), who rejected the claim that trying to change attitudes was ‘a waste of time’, saying that this would ‘negate “welfare” and “rehabilitation” work’, and was ‘not borne out by Departmental experience over many years’.

Jones’s comments were sourced to a US publication on the ‘multi-problem dilemma’ (ed. Brown 1968). This book collected together various ‘expert’ reactions to a project which had ‘proved’ that intensive casework with problem families made no appreciable difference to their condition. These reactions had emerged in a ‘face-to-face confrontation’ between the experts at a seminar on the project’s findings (Warren 1968, p. 90). The book is interesting because it demonstrates the way in which apparently inconsistent discursive outputs like the Brotherhood of St Laurence’s philosophy of empowerment and the SEC’s paternalism are in fact produced by a consistent and unifying set of discursive relations, and why Jones’s arguments are not.

In her contribution to the book, Perlman (1968, p. 47) suggested that casework could be ‘good’ and ‘bad’, and implied that a different kind of casework might have had different results. Similarly, the Brotherhood’s Family Centre Project illustrates that although the ‘no-hoper’ was certainly a possible form of subjectivity within the problem family discourse, the relation between it and the subject-position of ‘rehabilitated client’ was one of permanent possibility — if the right worker, the right intervention, the right approach could be found, then the former would become the latter. This focus on finding the ‘right’ intervention, the one which would work, while maintaining faith that such an intervention could be found, unites the SEC and the Family Centre, while excluding Jones, who holds that no intervention can do any good. The discourse of the ‘right’ innovation also permitted the Department’s claim that its role was not a ‘social’ welfare one. Despite the Director’s role in chairing and coordinating the SEC, it is still evident that he still considered remedial work with ‘problem’ families outside the Department’s function — that is, that ‘there was no reason why the Housing Department should do this kind of work’ (Housing Department 1973g). For the Department, the ‘right’ intervention was one performed by another agency.

These ideas about rehabilitation were all aspirational — funding and institutional support for them in reality was not forthcoming. However, even though they were not ‘practiced’ in the sense of being carried out in an organised and authorised way by real social workers with real clients, they are important because they establish the perimeters of the discursive space in which problem families were discussed and interpreted. It is also not unreasonable to suggest that this kind of thinking about how one ‘should’ work with a problem family might have informed the way in which workers did carry out their work. For example, one welfare officer reported that she was working with other organisations ‘to see if there is any way at all help could be given to young girls who start out in married life, quite often with a baby on the way and haven’t the faintest idea of how to run a home’. The suggested solution was some kind of program to ‘teach them how to look after their homes and families by working to a system. If this can be done it will not only help the family but will improve the living standards of tenants’ (Housing Department 1967f). Such suggestions open up the space for a range of subject forms for those carrying them out — ‘the innovative worker’, ‘the effective worker’, ‘the controlling worker’, ‘the practical worker’. Similarly, as the subjects of this form of educative discursive practice, clients had available to them the material with which they could make themselves into subjects who were cooperative or uncooperative, willing or unrepentant, diligent or careless.

## **Resolution**

The discursive practices discussed in this section — the scientific and bureaucratic process of defining the ‘problem’ household, the day-to-day activities of managing the estate and procedures of rehabilitation — exist contemporaneously and within the same discursive formation. However, there are differences amongst them, and these arise from the different institutional locations from which each application of the discourse obtains its legitimacy.

In the case of the bureaucratic and rehabilitative applications, the institutions are the professional institutions of housing management and social work, especially their practice of a particular kind of research. This institutional positioning gives speaking subjects status and authority, which both authenticates the discursive claims they are making and determines the form of the knowledge which is produced. In the case of the estate management application, however, the legitimating institution is the estate itself, functioning as a ‘systemic program’ (Foucault 1991 [1980], p. 80) for the organisation of daily life. Welfare officers are positioned at the centre of this program as the principal practitioners of ‘estate management’. This position gives them the status of a speaking subject, with the authority to identify particular forms of behaviour as contraventions of the specifications laid down within the program.

Despite the differences, the three forms of practice are discursively consistent. They exist in the form of a discursive either/or, as discursive alternatives rather than discursive contradictions, each bringing into play a different set of discursive relations between objects and subjects, but in each case produced by a consistent set of discursive rules. In all, the ‘problem family’ is understood as a disorderly and intrusive object, and although the solution appears different — classification and containment versus removal versus rehabilitation— all produce the knowledge that there is a correct and an incorrect way for the ‘problem family’ to be, and all respond to that knowledge accordingly. Bureaucratically, the (incorrect) disorder of family chaos and dysfunction is managed by defining and locating the ‘problem family’ (correctly) within a scientifically-validated discursive framework. The rehabilitative and ‘on-the-ground’ approaches are directed at positioning the family within a physical space: removing it from the (incorrect) location of the ‘normal’ estate and placing it into the (correct) location of the rehabilitative site

## **The tenant reconfigured: welfare and special needs tenants**

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### **Something new: the ‘welfare’ tenant**

In August 1982, following an Opposition motion supported by a number of Independents, the Tasmanian Legislative Council established a select committee to inquire into state housing (Department of Housing and Construction 1982k). In its submission to this inquiry, the Housing Department described its ‘main aims’ as including the provision of housing for ‘those persons who cannot financially afford private rental housing or who for a variety of reasons are not acceptable in a social sense in some privately developed housing areas’. In order to achieve this, it made ‘every endeavour’ to ‘preserve home occupancy’ by such households (c. 1982b, p. 11). There was, however, a caveat attached. The submission states that ‘many’ of these tenants ‘never cope despite constant attention from a number of sources, both Government and voluntary, and they are forced to move on for a variety of reasons’ (p. 9). Although the Department would make efforts to coordinate some kind of follow-up assistance for those who needed it, it was also the case that ‘some’ tenants ‘attempt to use the welfare “system” to the detriment of the majority’. The Department had a ‘responsibility’ to both government and taxpayers. This meant it needed

to maintain a high degree of equity between its tenants and, on occasions, is required to take positive action to repossess properties where excessive damage has occurred, where harassment of neighbours is beyond reasonable limits and where excessive arrears of rental exist because the occupant “will not” rather than “cannot” pay (p. 10).

This account has been produced by a discourse which varies in a number of important ways from that apparent in earlier examples. First, the Department is explicitly acknowledging as its

core responsibility not just those unable to afford decent housing but also those who ‘are not acceptable in a social sense’ — that is, the Department concedes that the housing of those it would once have classified as ‘problem’ families is part of its work. Secondly, as I have discussed (see pp. 65, 72, 73 above), where once it was considered important to make the same, if not more, effort to protect the Department’s estates from incursions by ‘problem tenants’ as would be made on behalf of private estates, in this example the Department’s estates are treated as places where once unacceptable behaviour is now, by implication, acceptable. Damage can occur — as long as it is not ‘excessive’; harassment of neighbours can occur — as long as it is within ‘reasonable limits’. In essence, estates are no longer a safe haven from unacceptable behaviour, but the place in which people live if they are unable to behave acceptably. Thirdly, rather than co-opting other agencies to explicitly rehabilitate problem tenants or moving them on when rehabilitation is considered impractical, the Department’s objective is now to ‘preserve’ their tenure in its houses. This establishes the Department in a holding pattern of managing dysfunction rather than eradicating it. Fourthly, there is the introduction of the notion of tenants hurting ‘the majority’ by ‘using’ welfare services in an inappropriate way. Although this can function at a practical level as a rhetorical ‘out’ for the Department in relation to controversy over evictions, it is also a new discursive formulation not apparent in the documents I have looked at which date from earlier years. Fifthly, there is the sense that the housing authority no longer considers itself to operate as an explicitly non-welfare service; the Department now understands its provision of housing assistance to be part of a ‘welfare “system”’, one of a number of welfare services which can be ‘used’ by tenants. This is confirmed by an increased tendency in the documents from the 1970s to refer to public housing using the term ‘welfare housing’ (see also note on p. 103 below). Sixthly, there is the notion of Departmental responsibility, not just to the government, but to a specific constituency of taxpayers — and taxpayers’ interests are distinguished from those of tenants, suggesting that they are mutually exclusive categories.

Verity Archer (2010, pp. 24-26) has examined the development of what she refers to as ‘a new-class discursive frame’ in Australia in 1978 in which ‘taxpayers’ were positioned against ‘welfare workers’, who were considered to ‘[spend] their time concocting grand, overblown and ultimately unrealistic programmes that were a waste of money for taxpayers and of no benefit to the poor’, and against the welfare state, which was constructed as something which ‘did not provide for “the people” but provided for “others”; bludgers, special interest groups, public servants and out-of-touch intellectuals’. There is nothing I can point to in the documents I examined to directly support the claim that either the Department’s use of the term ‘taxpayer’ in this context or its concern that some were inappropriately ‘using’ the system are explicit expressions of this kind of discourse, but they are new elements in the Department’s statements and are suggestive of a possible connection between the changing

discursive practice of the Department and the emerging discursive influence of the ‘new Right’ in Australia in the late 1970s (see Archer, V 2009, 2010).

### **Community rising: the ‘special needs’ tenant**

Other documents from the same period as the Department’s submission to the Legislative Council inquiry include accounts of another kind of discursive practice. This is the discursive practice of non-government or ‘community’ organisations, and the way in which they interacted with ‘problem’ families and with the Department.

My analysis of these documents identified three significant aspects of the discourse of the tenant as practiced by the community sector. The first is the emergence of a new conceptualisation of ‘need’. One of the reports from the SMPA’s housing research program made some pointed comments about the tendency of community groups to organise around the needs of particular population groups, arguing that this was a ‘fragmenting’ and ‘divisive’ strategy which set organisations and their clients in competition with each other for resources, and allowed the Government to use ‘inadequate funding and [a] differential response to lobbying’ to hide ‘the true extent of need which concerted action and adequate funding would demonstrate’.

Housing policy and service delivery, the report argued, needed to ‘differentiate between what is a common need of all people and what is a special need of some’ (Tickner 1980c, pp. 2-3).

Despite this instance of critique, the documents suggest a service delivery practice increasingly ordered around the concept of ‘need’ as an individuated quality, defined according to one’s membership of a particular, ‘special’ group rather than, as before, as a quality that had very little to do with the individual and was determined instead by the degree to which their physical environment met a universal set of objective standards. Even the SMPA researchers identified specific groups such as handicapped people, the aged, Aboriginal people and unemployed young people as in particular and distinct ‘housing need’ (for example Bound 1980; Tickner 1980a).

Like the SMPA, Everingham (1998, pp. 2, 7-8) has pointed to the danger in allowing ‘the community’ to be identified as a series of ‘disadvantaged interest groups’, on the basis that this strategy ‘others’ the disadvantaged by constructing ‘difference’ as a barrier to self-reliance, and more significantly, contains the efforts of pressure groups to ‘defining difference strategically’ in a competition for government funding. What results is the corporatisation of ‘community’ (2003, p. 57). I did not see evidence pointing to such corporatisation in the documents I examined, but Everingham’s analysis, although historically informed, focuses on a later period. There are, however, multiple signs to be read in the archive of growing ‘community’ influence



on government policy, and that influence plays out in the spaces created by the new object of 'need' as an individuated quality (a point explored further below).

A second form of community sector practice that I identified in the archive was that community subjects increasingly claimed not just access to knowledge of the 'problem', but the right to speak about it. The SMPA put considerable emphasis on the importance of community involvement in housing policy development and decision-making (Tickner 1980b, p. 6). It criticised the Government for its lack of commitment to this, accusing it of failing to engage with community groups, using attacks on their credibility and 'the validity of their inputs' to restrict their contribution, and withholding information the community needed 'to develop informed positions on issues and contribute to decision-making in a meaningful way' (p. 12). In contrast, the Department's annual reports stressed its ongoing efforts to build 'relationships' with a range of community groups (see for example Lockhart 1977, p. 27; 1978, pp. 27-28).

At the time of the Legislative Council inquiry, there are signs that the Department now considered the influence of umbrella or 'peak' organisations such as the Tasmanian Council of Social Service (TasCOSS) and Shelter Housing Action as politically problematic. In his instructions to the staff preparing his briefing notes for his appearance before the inquiry, the Director of Housing requested 'some notes on the issues we know that Shelter/TasCOSS etc have raised' (Department of Housing and Construction 1983e). There is also a press clipping from January 1983 which reports Opposition calls for the State Government to 'immediately implement' the recommendations of a TasCOSS 'report on housing' (1983d). In a handwritten memo at the foot of the clipping the Director sought confirmation that the 'report' referred to is TasCOSS's submission to the inquiry and received the reply that it was.

The inquiry's terms of reference included consideration of the adequacy of public housing funding; interest rates; the adequacy, for tenants, of the coordination of voluntary, government and charitable effort; 'the social and psychological effects of eviction or threatened eviction and the effect on families'; and the rebate system (Department of Housing and Construction 1982k). The 'majority' of the evidence put to the inquiry was, according to the Committee's report, about the relationship between government and community groups. From the report's account of this evidence, these groups saw themselves as existing in response to 'need', including 'need' not met by their government equivalents, and asserted their identity as specialised, 'innovative' and 'grass-roots' (Legislative Council Select Committee on State Housing 1985, pp. 19-20). They positioned themselves in the discursive field between the Department and its tenants, a stance expressed in terms of sad necessity. For example, the Australian Association of Social Workers complained of the remoteness of the monolithic

Department from the individual tenants, which meant that other organisations were compelled to act as mediators:

[W]e see doctors issuing certificates for transfers, or for a change of heating type; social workers are used as advocates, politicians are used as levers... Such an approach is tiring, cumbersome & all too often when even the latter avenues produce no results the decision is made to give up. There is no simple way of dealing with a large organisation from an individual standpoint (cited in Legislative Council Select Committee on State Housing 1985, p. 22).

The assumption of the subject-function of ‘intermediary’ informs a third aspect of discursive practice. There are many references in the files, SMPA research reports and the Director’s annual reports to Parliament, which suggest that by the end of the 1970s and into the 1980s, the Department was under increasing pressure to purchase houses which could be used by community groups as emergency accommodation for families in ‘crisis’. For example, in 1983, the Department purchased Barton Lodge in Launceston for subleasing to a community organisation for use as crisis housing and two houses in Hobart to use as ‘half way houses’ for young people exiting a local shelter (Sproule 1983, pp. 13, 19; see also 1985, p. 16). In 1985, 32 dwellings were purchased for use by low income university students (1985, p. 11). The Department made dwellings available for the use of people with disabilities, some for accommodation and others for the provision of ‘training to give disabled people sufficient skills to maintain a more independent lifestyle’ (p. 18). In 1986, the Liberal Government’s policy platform incorporated a specific commitment that a ‘hostel’ for families needing emergency accommodation would be ‘provided for’ Hobart City Mission (Housing Department 1986b). By 1989, the Department provided in total 191 properties to community groups for residential use (Sproule 1989, p. 44).

### **The community, the Department and the tenant**

The effect of the shift in the Department’s discursive practice, the emergent practice of the community sector, and the way in which the two were discursively positioned in relation to each other was that the object of ‘need’ was given a different form within the discourse. ‘Need’ had once been defined as the lack of adequate housing — now, its meaning had fragmented and diversified. ‘Need’ was now explicitly related to particular social and demographic characteristics — age, for example — or to particular social circumstances — leaving a violent relationship, or leaving home for the first time. This individuated ‘need’ implied responses other than just a sanitary and weather-proof dwelling in which to create a home. Women escaping violence, for example, certainly lacked adequate housing, but they also had other needs and increasingly, the provision of housing alone was not considered a sufficient response. There was an expectation of some kind of ‘service’ response as well.

Over the preceding decades, the Department had repeatedly rejected the suggestion that delivering ‘services’, beyond the provision of housing, was part of its remit. The Department’s welfare officers had a rehabilitative role, but this rehabilitation was directed at a tenant’s capacity to live properly within a home — to keep the house clean, maintain it and improve it, to tend the garden, and to live quietly and appropriately within the wider neighbourhood. Some of the welfare officers may have aspired to something more, but at the ‘official’ or institutional level, the Department’s position was that ‘services’ were to be delivered by other government departments or by charitable organisations. The emergence of new and particular categories of ‘need’, which were in part constituted by the implication that they required new kinds of responses, introduced an expanded range of community-based social services into the discursive field.

Discursively, the occupation of portions of the discourse by community groups functioned to close off certain possibilities for the Department. Rather than providing through its homes the spaces and settings in which and by which slum dwellers could be converted into citizens and rehabilitation could be enacted upon ‘problem’ tenants, the Department, as a discursive subject, now acted merely to manage the externalities arising from the existence of ‘welfare’ tenants, and the work of defining this function and judging the Department’s performance of it was now discursively assigned to charities and voluntary organisations. These organisations themselves had available a range of subject-positions — that of critic, advocate, colleague, collaborator — and these subject-positions articulated ‘the Department’ as an object of discourse constituted by its failure to appropriately assist and support its tenants. This, finally, reformed the subject of the tenant, especially the ‘problem’ tenant using the additional, non-Departmental services. Such tenants could now adopt the subject-position of ‘victim’, wrongly treated by the Department and forced into reliance upon charity, charity which would now respond to the needs of the tenant in an appropriate way.

The consequence — of the fragmentation of the object of ‘need’, the colonisation of public housing discourse by the ‘community’ sector, and the various subject-positions that were thereby made available within the discourse — was the production of a different kind of ‘Department’ positioned in a different kind of way to those in ‘need’. In earlier decades, the Department’s control of the assessment process for housing applicants was legitimised by its technical expertise in what constituted ‘good’ housing. That is, because the Department had privileged access to the knowledge needed to determine what was substandard and to erect what was of appropriate quality, it was able to exercise control over the object of ‘need’ and to regulate the relationship between that object and the subjectivities available to applicants, and was able to do so from a position of authority and status. Now, however, need derived from subjective demands linked to identity and personal vulnerability and the sustained demand

from the community sector that the Department respond to 'need' by providing properties which could be used as crisis housing constructed the Department's role in a different way. The Department was now responsible for all people without adequate housing (rather than for people who qualified for its particular kind of housing), yet the nature of this responsibility was defined in part by the Department's failure to respond appropriately to those in need. That is, those occupying the crisis housing were the people the Department was failing to make provision for within its housing program. The discursive relations underpinning all of this produced from these disparate objects and subject-positions a particular form of knowledge in relation to public housing. Specifically, it became discursively 'true' that the Department was unable, due to its innate characteristics (its bureaucratic structure, its isolation from its clients), to deliver an appropriate or effective service, and that the service required should and could only be delivered by community organisations. The inability of the Department to any longer lay claim to expertise in either the identification of need or the means to address it, alongside the assumption of expertise by the community sector, led to its loss of the right to speak in relation to its own role as a provider of housing.

# CHAPTER 4: THE TENANCY

## Introduction

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In this chapter, I describe changes in the contractual relationship between the Housing Department and the people who occupied its homes. This relationship was nominally organised around either a rent-to-purchase contract or a tenancy agreement, but discursively, it was also the focus of a number of important practices: the setting of rents, the allocation of rebates and the administration of the conditions of occupancy. Through an examination of these practices as they appear in the archive, I identify three discursive shifts: a change in the discursive relationships that produced and defined ‘rent’; the replacement of the mutual production of the ‘garden estate’ as a visible and tangible source of pride for both tenants and the Department by the Departmental pursuit of ‘landscaping’ with the intent of concealing its tenants; and an adjustment in the positioning of the discursive object of the rental rebate relative to what was considered to be the appropriate function of the Department. These three shifts constituted a substantial change in the way in which the Department positioned itself in relation to the people who occupied its homes — from a relationship founded upon a mutual and permanent investment in a valuable asset (homes, estates, communities) to a relationship centred around the administration of a service (rental housing) for subjects defined by their inability to obtain shelter through their own resources.

From its inception in the 1930s and 1940s, the Government housing program focussed on supporting people on low incomes to become home owners through providing homes on a rent-to-purchase basis with generous terms. The cost to the occupants was set at an ‘economic’ level, directly reflecting the value of the home as a manufactured object. The provision of home ownership was explicitly linked to the development of ‘good’ citizen-subjects as elements of a collective citizenry, a discursive relationship which was reinforced by the efforts of the Department’s welfare officers to have tenants actively engage in improving their dwellings and, more particularly, their gardens in the interests of the estate as a whole.

For those who were genuinely unable to afford the ‘economic’ cost of a home, occupancy was possible under a rental arrangement with a rebated rent. The relationship between the ‘economic’ rent and the value of the home was destabilised by this, and despite acknowledging the necessity of providing subsidised housing for one section of the population, the Department increasingly saw rebates as a financial burden and tenancies, and tenants themselves, as inherently problematic.

During the 1970s, the relationship between the Department and occupants was disrupted by external financial pressures. The Department's own worsening financial situation was mapped onto a wider discursive 'grid', that of the State Budget as a whole. The effect of this was to reposition the Department's primary loyalty, orienting it away from its estates and its tenants and towards the Government, and constituting the expression of that loyalty in almost exclusively financial terms. At the same time, policy changes, in part driven by Commonwealth intervention through the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, but with support from within the Department itself, reorganised the Department's core functions. Although it still provided opportunities for home ownership, discursively — and increasingly at the level of practice too — the Department now operated as a provider of rental housing. The effect of this shift in function was that the inferiority that had long been ascribed to rental housing now extended to the Department as a whole.

## The foundations of the contractual relationship

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### What kind of contract?

In its 1944 annual report, the Board of the Agricultural Bank expressed the view that although there were benefits to subsidised rental housing, rent-to-purchase should be offered 'when circumstances permit' to 'every person' who wanted it, including those who could not afford the full cost (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1944, p. 8). The Board was here restating established policy: since 1938, the Bank had been empowered under changes to the *Homes Act 1935* to buy and develop land and build homes for sale on a rent-to-purchase basis, with or without a deposit (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1945, p. 5), and in September 1941, the Minister advised the Slum Abolition League of plans to establish a subsidised scheme for those on low incomes (1941b), a proposal he later described as 'the most far reaching and advanced housing scheme ever submitted to any Parliament in Australia' (Slum Abolition League 1941a).

The original recommendation of the Commonwealth Housing Commission had been that any housing program initiated by government should concentrate upon building housing for rent. My reading of the terms in which this recommendation was expressed is that this was less about an explicit ideological preference for rental as a tenure and more about a desire to protect potential home buyers from the inflation in building costs expected to occur in the immediate post-war period (Commonwealth Housing Commission 1944, p. 13). Many secondary sources, including some written by officers of the Department itself, state that Tasmania withdrew from the CSHA in 1950 because the Tasmanian Government did have an explicit ideological preference for home ownership and objected to the Commonwealth's requirement that it build for rent (see Lewis 1999, p. 260; Pugh 1976, pp. 29-30). However, the material

available in the archive points in a different direction. The Tasmanian Government was indeed committed to home ownership on principle — and for this reason it had already sought to vary its agreement with the Commonwealth so that it could sell homes built with funding from the CSHA on the same conditions as those which applied under the Homes Act. The Commonwealth agreed to this, and the Bank's chairman announced in 1947 that 'it is confidently expected that a large proportion of the homes now occupied on a tenancy basis will subsequently be purchased by the occupiers' (Adams 1947a, p. 21).

The withdrawal from the CSHA, then, was for another reason; documents in an Agricultural Bank file on amendments to the Homes Act suggest that the Tasmanian Government wanted the Commonwealth to provide it with an interest rate reduction on the money loaned to it under the CSHA. This would allow the Department to reduce its administration charges, and thus '[ease] weekly rentals in relation to tenants' by 8s. a week (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania c. 1950). The Commonwealth, which was already meeting 60% of the losses arising from the provision of rental rebates (Adams 1947a, p. 13), refused (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1950b). In a memo on the matter, the Director of Housing stated that it was

apparent that ... no significant benefit is to be derived by this State in continuing with the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement as it would appear that as originally envisaged the Commonwealth is not willing to play its full part in subsidising losses that were contemplated with the implementation of the Agreement, and so assist the States with administration expenses under the Scheme (1950a).<sup>18</sup>

Following its withdrawal from the CSHA, the Department continued to offer some rental housing, but it did so according to an assessment of applicants' financial circumstances. In 1945, the Minister for Housing equated the capacity to pay full economic 'rents' with home ownership, and the need for rebated rents with tenancies — that is, rental occupancy was something to be done only when a subsidy was required (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1945, p. i). Allotment schedules from the mid-1950s listed allocations for 'tenancy or purchase', but did not specify which applied to which applicant, which implies that the decision was made independently of the process of matching applicants to houses. By 1957, the Department's policy was 'to allot dwellings on purchase contract conditions except in the case of flats or where the allottee is not able to meet the full economic charges' (Plummer 1957, p. 7), and this was still the case in 1969, at which point less than 10% of new dwellings were being allocated on tenancies (Housing Department 1969z). As one commentator put it, '[o]nly those in receipt of very low incomes (many of whom need rebates) rent houses' (Schouten 1972, pp. 7-8).

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<sup>18</sup> Tasmania re-joined the CSHA in 1956 in order to guarantee its access to funding, but the Director maintained that the Commonwealth gained more than Tasmania out of the arrangement (Plummer 1957, pp. 3-4).

## The purpose of the contract: home ownership

In discussing the Tasmanian Government's preference for home ownership, a distinction can be drawn between the object of home ownership and the home-owning subject. Home-owners exist in close relation to home ownership, but they are also the subject of — subjected to — the practice of 'being a home owner', which gives them status within the discourse, but limited capacity to speak. Home ownership as a desirable status, however, produces another subject-position, that of the aspiring home-owner. Such aspirants, particularly those who did so in difficult circumstances, were valorised. In the post-war period, for example, the Board of the Agricultural Bank 'specially commended' for their contribution those who, in the face of the post-war shortage of contractors, had 'undertaken the construction of their own homes' as owner-builders (Adams, Plummer & Veale 1951, p. 10; 1952, p. 10).

Discursive practice is a way of thinking and acting at once (Florence 1998 [c. 1980], p. 463). In the case of the Housing Department in Tasmania, the 'acting' in relation to home ownership discussed here is the codification, in law and program, of an explicit, singular and conscious promotion of a particular form of occupancy — even in the face of occupier preference for a different option.<sup>19</sup> The 'thinking' was articulated by the Board in such documents as its annual reports. Their argument was as follows: home ownership made both sound business sense, as giving an occupant financial equity in his [*sic*] home reduced the incidence of arrears, and was in the interests of the community as a whole, because it 'produces a better class of citizen and a higher standard of social welfare' (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1943, p. 8).

These latter claims seem to me to be a clear, if small, example of what Foucault was referring to when he commented that western thought sought 'to ensure that discourse should occupy the smallest possible space between thought and speech' (Foucault 1981 [1970], p. 65). There is no space made available within the Department's statements on the virtues of home ownership to interrogate or even identify the underlying logic which produced this belief. Indeed, there is built into some later statements a tacit awareness that the logic *was* invisible: in 1963, the Director of Housing commented that '[t]he policy of home ownership is so engrained in this state that further reference appears redundant' (Duke 1963, p. 7), and the year after that, described home ownership as so long 'integral' to government housing policy that it had 'lost any novelty it may have possessed' (1964, p. 7).

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<sup>19</sup> This last point is best expressed by the Department's response to the perplexingly low take up of the option of converting leases into purchase contracts in the 1950s — the appointment of an officer to undertake a program of door-to-door home visits in order to persuade tenants of the benefits (Plummer 1954, p. 7; 1957, p. 7).



US scholars (for example, Tobey, Wetherell & Brigham 1990; Craig-Taylor 1998; Drew 2013) have highlighted the connection between the legal status of property ownership (of which home ownership is a particularly accessible form) and the assumption that it bestows ‘good’ citizenship upon occupiers. The chairman of the Agricultural Bank justified Tasmania’s early departure from the original intent of the CSHA on the basis that the Tasmanian Government had always put ‘considerable emphasis ... on the principle of home ownership’ in its own state schemes, and the ‘wisdom’ of this approach was confirmed

by the manner in which homes purchased under the scheme are maintained. The assumption of the responsibility of ownership invariably brings in its train the voluntary acceptance of all responsibilities of citizenship, the full development of character and withal, a sense of individual and family security (Adams 1947a, p. 20).

This can be read as an extension of the environmental determinism that informed the critique of the slums and the promotion of town planning (see Chapter 3). But in this instance, rather than the materiality of a particular kind of living environment shaping an individual’s character and capacity, it is a particular form of contractual connection to an environment that serves to direct behaviour. That is, the discursive boundaries of the ‘home ownership’ object and its relationship to the home-owning subject are established by the procedures, assumptions and practices embedded within and implied by the purchase contract.

The link between that contractual arrangement and the notion of investing in property is further underscored by later anxieties: in his 1964 annual report, the Director of Housing observed that home ownership was now regarded by new occupants as a right, not a privilege, and that some did not seem to realise that with rights came responsibilities. There was in fact ‘an apparently growing attitude of irresponsibility on the part of some purchasers; an attitude which seems to denote that a contract needs only to be honoured while immediate benefit can be derived but can be discarded when observance of its conditions imposes a temporary hardship’ (Duke 1964, p. 7). This ‘irresponsibility’ might be seen as undermining the discursive connection between homeownership and the production of ‘better’ citizens but in fact, it was this link between the equity derived by the home owner from his *[sic]* investment and the development of ‘character’ and ‘citizenship’ that the Department drew upon in its response. Purchase contracts did not require deposits, but in order to encourage the ‘spirit of possession’, the Department sought to encourage them anyway (1963, p. 7). Likewise, the intent of schemes under which payment of a deposit entitled an applicant to ‘extras’ was ‘to foster in the allottee through the establishment of a small equity in the property, the spirit of possession leading to greater care and interest in the property in general’ (Allwinton 1969, p. 13). Therefore it was the assumed qualities of the object of ‘home ownership’ which were operationalised as a disciplinary strategy to modify the behaviour of subjects.

### **The contract price: setting the 'rent'**

For occupants of Housing Department homes, home ownership and rental contracts with the Department did not exist as discrete entities. Home ownership was, in most instances, obtained via *rent-to-purchase* arrangements. Title was not transferred until after all payments had been made, and this required the Department to enter into an ongoing supervisory relationship with its 'tenants' in order to protect its interest. This relationship was regulated by the practice of tenancy management, but established and perpetuated through a subset of that practice: the payment and collection of 'rent'. Evans (2003, pp. 1-5, 44-49), in her compilation of oral histories of the Department's Windsor Court flats, points to the role of the door-to-door rent collector in mediating the relationship between the Departmental bureaucracy and individual tenants, and identifies the replacement of collectors with other, more remote forms of rent collection as a critical turning point in the nature of that relationship. I argue that an equally important determinant of the way in which the payment and collection of rent regulated the relationship was the rent in and of itself. The rent, by which I mean rent paid under lease agreements *and* rent paid in order to purchase, was calculated in a way which related it specifically and significantly, if perhaps inaccurately, to the value of the home itself.

Throughout the 1950s, the Tasmanian housing authority, like those in other states, set rents using a 'historic cost' method. Such an approach 'placed a rent on a dwelling ... sufficient to cover all outgoings ... on that dwelling' (Jones, cited in Tulloch 1979, p. 119). In Tasmania, the Department put this principle into practice by adding together the capital costs at the time of construction, which included on-site construction costs, interest during construction, architectural and administration costs, land purchase, surveys and development, and then divided the result up to identify the amount that would need to be paid per week for the economic life of the property to reach this total. To the weekly amount were added components to cover amortisation, maintenance, rates and insurance, a provision for vacancies and defaults and an administration charge (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania c. 1950). The result was identified as the 'economic rent' for the property.<sup>20</sup>

Economic rents were not necessarily low rents. In 1963, in response to 'expressions of concern' about how 'high' the Department's charges were compared with those of other states, the Director of Housing argued that incorporating allowances for items like rates freed occupants from having to meet these in a lump sum when they fell due, that the Department's

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<sup>20</sup> The methods used to calculate the amount paid by tenants and the amount paid by purchase contractors were almost the same, but there were minor differences. For example, the purchase instalment amount did not include a maintenance component because one of the conditions of the purchase contract was that the purchaser undertook any maintenance themselves. However, as objects of discourse, they occupy the same discursive space and so in this section I speak about 'rent' in relation to both.

homes were excellent value for money as they were fully serviced and the cost included drainage, fences and paths, and that, in fact, ‘it would not be possible for the individual private home builder at the same cost to purchase land and build a dwelling of the same size and standard as those constructed by the Department’ (Duke 1963, p. 20).

Thus, ‘economic rent’ is presented in the documents as a self-evident ‘fact’: £x per week represents the correct value of the property because it is the outcome of a set of calculations explicitly organised to identify and quantify that value, supported by a set of procedures and processes designed to ensure that the value is ‘good’ value. However, despite the conflation of rent and value within the ‘economic rent’, the use of historic costs rendered their relationship fragile. Under the historic cost method, once set, the capital component of the rent was not subsequently adjusted to account for inflation, which meant that houses in older subdivisions were subject to lower rents than those in new areas. The difference became substantial in the post-war period because inflation was so high. The effect was to disturb other areas of practice — for example, the reluctance of tenants on leases to move to a purchase contract (which would involve a recalculation of their payments) was attributed to the fact that many of them lived in the oldest estates and paid very low rents (Plummer 1958, p. 9).<sup>21</sup>

For some tenants, however, even low ‘economic rents’ would not meet the affordability benchmark established by the 1945 CSHA, which was that rental payments should not consume more than one fifth of the household’s income. For these tenants, rents were reduced to an ‘affordable’ level by means of a rental rebate. The provision of rebated rents was, according to the Agricultural Bank’s chairman, the CSHA’s ‘most important principle’. Like economic rents, rebates were calculated according to a formula. For basic wage-earners, the maximum rebate allowed was the amount needed to reduce payments from the economic rent to one fifth of the family income. However, the allowance varied on a sliding scale, so that those on less than the basic wage received proportionally more, and those on more than the basic wage, proportionally less (Adams 1947a, p. 13).

Given the importance of the economic rent in defining the value of what the Agricultural Bank, and later the Department, was providing to tenants, the existence of a rebate was itself

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<sup>21</sup> A possible resolution to this problem emerged somewhat later, in 1972, when the Director of Housing informed Parliament that the Department’s ‘acute’ cost situation had led it to review its method of establishing economic rents. It was now considering ‘averaging’ its costs across all properties when determining ‘economic rent’, rather than tying rents to the specific historical cost of each property. The Director stated that it was ‘becoming increasingly evident’ that tenants living in older properties and paying ‘ridiculously low rents’ had to share the costs ‘if they expect to share in the benefits of increased maintenance and housing standards’ (Allwinton 1972, p. 4). It is unclear, at least from the documents I examined, whether the Department went ahead with this proposal or not — any reform may have been overtaken by the introduction of market rents under the 1978 CSHA (see p. 100 below).

problematic, and problematising for the ‘fact’ of the economic rent. Even before Tasmania’s withdrawal from the CSHA, which meant that the share of rebate costs to be met by the state increased from 40% to 100% (Housing Department 1960b), the Bank’s chairman argued that although rebates offered an ‘answer’ for one group in the community, it was ‘not noticeably possible’ to extend them to everyone, even though everyone but rebated tenants were continuing to pay very high construction costs (Adams 1947a, p. 67).

In this section I have reviewed the basis of the contractual relationship between the Department and the occupants of its homes. There are a number of points to this relationship which are worth emphasising here. First, although legally, even in relation to those on purchase contracts, the Department principally acted as a landlord, its energies were specifically directed towards enabling home ownership. The rationale for this was that ownership, by facilitating the investment of individual effort — as well as individual capital — into a unique, physically-situated home, made people into better citizens. Secondly, the practices and procedures by which the cost of those homes was established arose from and reinforced the knowledge that government housing was a valuable product for which people who could afford to do so must be prepared to pay. As one Director of Housing wrote, ‘people in Australia have accepted the fact that higher standards of accommodation can only be obtained by a higher payment in respect thereof’. Thirdly, from the earliest stages of the program there was a preoccupation with ideas of equity, and the claim that everyone should bear an appropriate share of the burden, although this was tempered by the view that was a small group in the community who merited particular and special consideration.

## **Managing the contractual relationship**

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### **Equal treatment of purchasers and tenants**

By emphasising home ownership, and restricting rental homes where possible solely to those who needed rebates, the Department seems to have created two distinctive forms of occupancy. However, in practice, the border between them was porous. It is already noted above that the Department was keen to encourage people to convert from tenancies to purchase contracts wherever possible, but movement was also permitted in the other direction. In 1962-63, 174 purchase contracts were relinquished, some due to internal transfers but others ‘because circumstances forced the purchasers to revert to tenancies in order to obtain the benefit of rental rebates’ (Duke 1963, p. 7). Various references in the welfare officers’ reports indicate that in most cases, these ‘circumstances’ involved the household’s loss, through death, ‘desertion’, illness or imprisonment, of their (male) breadwinner (Housing Department 1965u, 1966n, 1966m, 1967j, 1968m, 1968o).

Further evidence of the blurred boundaries between purchasers and tenants is evident in the way in which the welfare officers frequently use terms like ‘tenant’ and ‘rent’ to apply to purchase contractors and their instalments, even to the extent of combining the two statuses, as in ‘Purchase Contract tenants’ (Housing Department 1967k). Officers used the one form to record their interactions with all occupants (c. 1971b). Like tenants, purchase contractors were required to lay out gardens and ‘maintain the property in good order and repair’ (Agricultural Bank of Tasmania 1945, pp. 5-6, 12), and the Department carried out annual inspections to ensure that they did so (Duke 1960, p. 15). According to another source, Housing Department officers ‘think that many applicants do not distinguish between renting and buying a house. Their weekly repayments are often regarded as rent payments’ (Schouten 1972, p. 10). Essentially then, despite a conceptual distinction between the two types of tenure, the discursive practice of the Department’s interactions with households assigned to them the subject-position of ‘occupant’, rather than establishing separate positions for ‘purchasers’ and ‘tenants’ — though whether the occupants themselves accepted the consequences of this uniform subject-status is open to question (see Housing Department 1965d, 1967l, 1967m).

### **The exception: managing ‘the rebate case’**

Despite the blindness to tenure evident in many aspects of the Department’s operations, there were differences between purchase contracts and tenancy agreements that affected day-to-day practice. The most prominent of these was that only tenants could be in receipt of a rebate.

The cost of providing the rebates on an day-to-day basis was met by the State’s consolidated revenue fund, but the Department was required to repay the amount expended each year by returning to consolidated revenue ‘a matching profit’ obtained from its trading activities. If the Department’s trading profit was insufficient to cover the full amount, then the Department had to use its capital reserves to make up the difference. By the mid-1960s, its capacity to do this was becoming constrained (Duke 1966, p. 8).

The welfare officers’ reports document the growing dimensions of the problem — one reported that rebate numbers were rising, ‘as tenants age, are taken ill or die, ... this together with those being housed on compassionate grounds will continue the increase as time elapses’ (Housing Department 1966h). As noted above, it was the lack of a breadwinner that in most cases made a rebate necessary; ‘rebate cases’, according to a welfare officer, were ‘mainly invalids, elderly folk, widows and deserted wives’ (1965u). The growing number of the latter in particular caused the welfare officers considerable concern (1965a, 1966a, 1968n), and in 1968, the Director observed that the issue of deserted wives was ‘of concern to all housing and

welfare authorities. In accepting responsibility to house these people, the community as a whole must appreciate that considerable additional costs are involved' (Allwinton 1968, p. 10).

As noted in Chapter 3, the 'deserted wife' was frequently identified with the object of the 'problem family', and through this relationship, with social dysfunction. But the financial implications of the absence of a breadwinner were also distinctly problematic for the Department, and the 'deserted wife' and her less pathological counterpart, the 'widow', presented this problem almost by definition. Welfare officers reported high levels of poverty among 'rebate cases' (Housing Department 1965e, 1966d, 1967j, 1968e) and as a core part of their duties, actively managed such cases by coordinating charitable and other assistance for them (for example, 1968m). But they also policed the rebate system. Deserted wives in particular could cause problems 'as there sometimes exists a doubt as to whether unauthorised persons are on the premises' (1965u). Similar 'doubt' was present in other 'cases', though 'proof' of dishonesty was hard to come by (1968q). On occasion, the welfare officers cooperated with other government agencies to investigate tenants on rebates; three such investigations in September 1967 resulted in two tenants being stripped of their rebates because both 'have more income than stated on their rebate forms and both have a gentleman living with them' (1967b).

Thus in the case of the 'rebate case', the relationship between Department and occupant was additionally shaped by a practice of 'investigation'. Welfare officers were empowered under the terms of their position description to undertake such 'special investigations' in relation to transfer requests, 'problem cases', desertion, welfare needs and arrears (Housing Department 1970d), and seem to have interpreted this provision broadly. One 'case', according to the welfare officer, 'required the patience and temerity of a private detective, especially as so many untruths have been told by members of the family existing in this house' (1968f). The practice of investigation produces a number of subjectivities; from the discursive relations established, what also emerges is the knowledge that tenants, specifically tenants whose status within the discourse was already subordinate due to their receipt of a rebate, are capable of deception and must be diligently monitored as a result.

### **Gardening as a condition of occupancy**

Much of my data on the day-to-day interaction between the Department and its occupants is drawn from the welfare files, particularly a sequence of welfare officers' reports from the 1960s (see Appendix). One of the most prominent themes of this material is the concentrated attention given to the creation of a normative external appearance for the estates, achieved through the cultivation of individual gardens. The garden was central to the way in which the

contractual relationship between the Department and occupants was understood and negotiated. Partly this derived from a well-established relationship between gardening and the creation of citizenship (the latter being central also to the Department's relationship with its occupants) — as Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi (2008, p. 79) have shown, '[t]wentieth-century horticultural writing insisted that the garden was a place in which citizenship was forged and cultivated'. But there are also elements particular to the specific contractual relationship between the Tasmanian Housing Department and occupants.

The February 1965 report of the northern region's welfare officer offers a typical example. In it, the officer records '[a]n all round improvement on all estates. The garden competition and the advice given to the tenants visited by the judges has helped a lot and will encourage them to improve their gardens'. Further on, she notes with approval some new occupants, who are 'a better class of tenant' and 'are all taking a keen interest in their gardens' (Housing Department 1965q).

In three particular areas, this report is consistent with many others in the file. The first of these is the way in which encouraging tenants to garden became integral to the way in which welfare officers engaged in the practice of making themselves as subjects. In encouraging tenants to garden, welfare officers were at one level, of course, just doing their jobs. According to a 1970 version of the officers' position description, one of the position's principal functions was to '[e]ncourage proper care of properties', and providing 'advice regarding home care' was one of the associated duties (Housing Department 1970d). The forms that welfare officers were required to complete indicate that they were asked to monitor 'the interest or lack of interest taken by occupants in caring for the dwelling and grounds' (c. 1971b). Among the 15 matters which officers should ensure they raised with new occupants were responsibilities with regard to upkeep, the existence of Gardens and Reserves Officers (who were 'available to advise on developing grounds') and the Department's garden competitions (c. 1971c, c. 1971a). But the zeal with which the officers appear to have undertaken their duties with regard to tenants' gardens went beyond this.

They are present in their reports not just as monitors of tenants' expertise but as experts themselves, people who were knowledgeable about what was required to produce a good garden and what might inhibit it. For example, following the conclusion of the region's garden competitions, one officer advised that future competitions should be held earlier in the season because 'lack of water has caused the lawns to dry off and apart from Dahlias [*sic*] and roses, the flowering of other plants is nearing an end' (Housing Department 1965k; also 1965l). In June 1965, rain prevented tenants from doing 'very much in the way of cutting lawns or digging' (1965m). A new estate was described as 'an ideal area for gardens, being level and not affected

by winds to any great extent' (1967c). Another officer noted with some concern the plight of two tenants, both widows with large families, one in poor health and the other, although 'keen on gardening', facing 'an almost impossible job for a woman' because her garden was so 'large, steep and rocky'. In response to this, she recommended that '[i]n future allotments to deserted wives, widows and also all invalid pensioners, I suggest that more use be made of the knowledge gained by Welfare and Garden and Reserves Officers during inspections ... regarding the suitability of properties to be offered to the above class of tenant' (1965p).

This expertise was particularly brought to bear upon tenants who were 'not garden-minded' (Housing Department 1965o). 'Neglected' gardens were noted and follow-up action taken (1966j), including a program of 'blitz' visits 'to homes which have a bad external appearance, noticed when passing' (1965a). Uncultivated nature strips were of ongoing concern (1965s, 1966k, 1966l, 1967b, 1968k, 1968j), as was the inclusion of flowers. One report expressed disappointment in the occupants of homes in Smithton, where 'the majority consider that as long as the grounds are tidy, there is no reason to plant flowers for colour' (1968h).

The second area of consistency in the reports is the conflation of the 'good' tenant with the keen gardener. Sometimes this was explicit, as in the following comment about a new estate: 'some good tenants in the new homes, all appear to be keen gardeners' (Housing Department 1967i). Other references were more oblique, such as the comparison drawn between two estates in another: the homes in the first 'are in good order', but little has been done with the gardens, by contrast with occupants of the second, who, although they had '[been] in occupation a much shorter period and water restrictions being in place, already have concrete paths and gardens laid out and in some cases lawns already up' (1965f). Gardening offered 'bad' tenants a way to rehabilitate themselves: one welfare officer remarked that most tenants were 'continuing to co-operate with the Department in keeping their gardens up to scratch' and that '*even Mrs [—] has a good flower garden*' (1965g, my emphasis), while another noted that a general improvement evident in two of the southern estates could be a sign that 'disinterested families' are 'now beginning to realise that gardening is not a "sissy" occupation' (1965p).

To express this in discursive terms, tenants accessed their subjectivity through a particular practice of the self (gardening) and in relation to a particular object (the 'right' kind of garden). If they did so successfully, they legitimately occupied the subject-position of 'good tenant', fulfilling their side of the contract with the Department. If they failed, they occupied another subject position, one which shared discursive territory with the 'problem' tenant (see Housing Department 1968l). However, the place of gardening in the discourse was not a passive one. Gardening was itself productive of good tenants — simply making an effort in this area was



sufficient to remake a tenant's subjectivity. This is evident in the frequency with which the reports comment upon 'improvement' or lack thereof in individual tenants. With regard to one 'routine' visit, the officer reported:

There has been a big improvement here. Mrs [—] herself seemed much more stable and amenable. Dwelling is cleaner and tidier, although children are still very unruly.

Grounds, both back and front are very overgrown, with grass beginning to dry off.

Mrs [—] stated that she thought her uncle might come over and rotary hoe the grounds and later make a lawn' (Housing Department 1965j; see also 1966k, 1967g, 1967c, 1968o, 1968f, 1968s).

The third area of consistency is that the focus of the welfare officers' efforts was not so much on improving the appearance or amenity of individual properties, but upon the aggregate result (see Housing Department 1965i, 1965c). Tenants gardened for a greater purpose — '[a]ttractive gardens make a tremendous difference to the appearance of an Estate [*sic*]' (1966c) and thus their obligation to the Department extended beyond care of their own properties to building the appearance and reputation of the estate as a whole. There is an instructive comparison between the concern about the 'large root systems' at an estate in Ulverstone, which 'must be cleared before any progress can be made' (1965u), and the comparative lack of concern about extensive rock behind some homes at the northern subdivision of Ravenswood, which meant merely that 'some tenants will have to give away back gardens' (1967a). Concern was not restricted just to occupants: one of the southern welfare officers reported that the grounds of the child health clinic on one of the estates 'are not well groomed at present' and that she had visited the clinic and informed the staff that 'the grounds must be kept in a satisfactory condition' (1966p).

Tenants who contributed to the collective effort won praise. One welfare officer expressed her hopes that the Somerset estate would become 'a show place as this is a sloping area which is attractive and the tenants are anxious to do their share, by planting their gardens and nature strips' and 'making their estate most attractive' (Housing Department 1968k), and earlier, had reported that the number of 'keen gardeners' in Scottsdale meant that this 'could be one of our best estates when completed' (1967i). By contrast, the estate of Newnham, despite its 'very fine gardens many with a brilliant show of flowers and well kept lawns', was 'spoiled' by two households, who were singled out by name in the report; beside each name, handwritten margin notes read, respectively, 'evicted 20/3/67' and 'greatly improved — July 1967' (1967a).

These practices did not derive purely from the obsession of individual welfare officers, although if the reports are read in isolation, that is one available interpretation. But the Director of Housing also declared himself 'very satisfied with the progressively improving

appearance of Departmental sub-divisions [*sic*]' (Duke 1963, p. 8), and welcomed the 'mellowing' of estates over time, as 'the growth of trees and shrubs ... converted what was once a raw, bare area into a mellow well-leafed subdivision with well kept lawns and gardens' (1964, p. 10). The Department also enthusiastically introduced Conservation Day events<sup>22</sup> into the life of its estate communities, to the extent that in June 1967, one of the welfare officers described how she had not only issued tenants with advance notice of the ceremony, but on the day itself 'went ahead of the officials and requested tenants to attend' (Housing Department 1968k).

## **The Commonwealth resets the contract: the CSHA, 1973-1984**

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The majority of this thesis, following the evidence available in the archive, focuses on the policies, practices and decisions of the Tasmanian Housing Department, and is therefore confined to events occurring within Tasmania. But the existence of the CSHA, between 1945 and 2008 the principal funding mechanism for public housing in Australia, means the role of the Commonwealth cannot be overlooked. Nominally, the CSHA was a negotiated agreement between the Commonwealth and the States, but the vertical fiscal imbalance which characterises Australian federalism meant that in practice, the Commonwealth was the dominant partner, able to use the agreement to impose its own policy direction onto the states (Gabriel & Jacobs 2006). But the CSHA can also be read as a political instrument into which particular discursive formations were 'invested' by political leaders (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 75-76). From the 1970s in particular, it was also a site of discursive contestation.

### **Whitlam and the 1973 CSHA**

Apart from a series of changes introduced by a new Government in 1956 (see Troy 2012), the CSHA changed little over its first thirty years. The 1973 CSHA, negotiated by the self-consciously reformist Whitlam Labor Government, introduced something radically new. The changed Agreement was welcomed by the Tasmanian Housing Department because of its low, fixed interest rate, something the states had 'fought for unsuccessfully' when negotiating with the previous Government (Allwinton 1973, p. 3). But, critically, the Agreement also put an 'embargo' on purchase contract sales (Tickner 1980c, p. 8). This embargo appears to be what is meant by a 1976 reference in one of the welfare files to a 'tenancy only policy' (Housing Department 1976e). The policy was applied to an increasing proportion of new construction

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<sup>22</sup> This refers to tree-planting ceremonies. The use of Conservation or Arbour Day celebrations in Australia to promote a sense of national identity and citizenship has been discussed by Robin (2002, p. 14), Holmes, Martin and Mirmohamadi (2008, pp. 114-115), David Jones (2010, p. 82) and Petrow (2012, pp. 7-8), among others. The files I looked at presented a picture consistent with these interpretations.

each year, and by August 1976 was fully implemented, with the Director of Housing stating in his annual report that the Department had from that date ‘ceased to sell homes by long-term contract of sale’. New houses could now only be allocated on a rental basis, and the Department no longer sold homes on purchase contract, although homes built prior to the 1973 CSHA could be sold for cash. The status of existing purchase contracts was unchanged (Lockhart 1977, p. 21).<sup>23</sup>

Tulloch (1979, p. 121) has argued that, when the provisions of the 1973 CSHA are read in their totality, ‘the accent on home ownership cannot be considered weak’. Read out of context, the tone of the Parliamentary debate over the introduction of the sales embargo would suggest precisely the opposite. Opposition members spoke strongly against it. It was described variously as ‘the most upsetting portion of the whole Bill’, ‘sinister’, ‘socialist’, ‘most objectionable’ and a clear sign that the country was headed towards ‘a republic... or, if not, a dictatorship’ (Australia, House of Representatives 1973a, pp. 2655, 2664; 1973c, pp. 2705, 2719-2720). By contrast, home ownership was ‘a deeply imbedded [sic] Australian aspiration’, a ‘tradition’ and a ‘birthright’ for the ‘average Australian’, a ‘lifelong inbuilt ambition’ for many, an ‘expectation’ and ‘security’. The ‘appreciation of and pride in the ownership of a Housing Commission house can be seen across the length and breadth of Australia’, said one MP (1973b, pp. 2658, 2663). There was ‘nothing more that people like’ than ownership, and the Government ‘should do all in our power’ to provide them with the ‘opportunity’ to obtain it, said another (1973c, p. 2721).

Government speakers presented as one of the principal motivations for the Government’s policy the effect of inflation on the cost of replacing sold properties; twice, speakers cited figures from New South Wales to the effect that replacing its 22,700 rental properties would cost more than \$500 million at today’s prices, compared to a historic construction cost of just \$127 million (Australia, House of Representatives 1973c, pp. 2703, 2725). The Government also argued that the policy was necessary to ensure that people would at least have shelter. For example, one Labor MP argued that although it would be ‘a popular political move’ to sell off public housing, and that although the ALP ‘would hope to see eventually that everybody has the right to own his own house’, ‘at this time it would be completely wrong for the

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<sup>23</sup> There are some contradictions between the information presented in the archival documents and the Department’s annual reports about the tenancy only policy and the explanation of the intent of the CSHA legislation as contained in its second reading speech which I have not been able to resolve. In the speech, the Federal Minister for Housing explained that the reforms would not prevent sales (although that appears to have been the original intention), but would put a ‘ceiling’ on the proportion of publicly built homes which could ‘be sold at a fair price to families who satisfy the needs test’. He specifically noted that the Tasmanian housing authority was to be granted two years’ grace to phase in the ceiling given its past practice of ‘[selling] a very high proportion of newly completed homes’. The ceiling would apply in full from 1976 (Australia, House of Representatives 1973a, p. 2221).

Government to adopt that policy' (p. 2703). The Minister for Housing explained that the Government was trying to protect the available public housing stock on behalf of those 'who pass through the housing authority systems' because of their 'need for shelter' (1973d, p. 2088). These homes would be 'modest', and with time, 'as their affluence develops', tenants would begin to desire something more — perhaps 'a double garage or a rumpus room' (1973c, p. 2725). They should use their time in public housing 'to save a deposit which may enable them to take up a loan through a building society or some other lending authority. The relatively modest home should then be made available for somebody else passing through the system' (1973d, p. 2088).

### **Fraser and the 1978 CSHA**

Just five years later the 1978 CSHA, put forward by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's conservative government, was welcomed by the Tasmanian Housing Department as 'undoubtedly a better agreement than its predecessors'. It partially reversed the 1973 changes, allowing new Commonwealth-funded homes to again be sold, though only for cash. In Parliament, the Federal Housing Minister emphasised that the new Agreement was based upon consultation with the states, which had yielded the following consensus position: 'widespread support for the extension of home ownership, for tailoring assistance to need, and for the flexibility which will allow the States to design programs to meet their own particular needs'. The intent of the home purchase provisions of the Bill was 'equal treatment between those purchasing privately and public housing tenants buying publicly-owned dwellings' (Australia, House of Representatives 1978b, p. 2142). Alan Cadman, speaking for the Government, explained that the Government had consulted with 'people requiring shelter' about what they considered they needed. He reported:

Home ownership was given primary importance. They considered it to be an Australian's right. There must be more involvement in a community if home ownership is to be achieved. There must be a greater sense of security for any group of people who have a permanent home which they own themselves. Home ownership provides an inbuilt protection from old age. There is more power over one's life and a pride in one's family if home ownership can be brought about by any mechanism which is open to governments... It gives families something to work for, and it also gives people a capacity to improve their lifestyles and their surroundings (1978b, pp. 2629-2630).

The Labor Opposition, however, argued that the sales provisions would make home ownership harder: once an 'achievable objective', it had now 'slipped further away from the means of the average Australian' and was now 'increasingly restricted mainly to the top 30 per cent or so of income earners' in part because the failure of the federal government to act to stimulate increased housing supply (Australia, House of Representatives 1978a, p. 2634). The former Housing Minister argued that removing the sales ceiling would mean the states would sell off their more desirable inner city housing, 'forcing housing commission tenants out to perimeter

suburbs where long travel distances and expensive fares will become a very serious problem' (p. 2633).

As well as ending the sales embargo, the 1978 CSHA required the introduction of market-related rents. These, according to the federal Minister, were introduced in response to 'evidence' that 'some people on high incomes pay subsidised rent'. The new method would be phased in gradually to avoid any 'hardship' (Australia, House of Representatives 1978b, p. 2142). Both the rental policy and the concern to 'avoid hardship flow from our concern that not all of the seriously disadvantaged are accommodated in public sector housing. There are many in need of assistance because of age, sickness, or some physical or mental disability' (p. 2143). In support of the Government's position, Cadman cited both the Henderson inquiry (Commission of Inquiry into Poverty 1975) and a report on housing produced by the Whitlam Government's Priorities Review Staff (1975), stating that Henderson had 'pointed out the substantial inequities involved in current public housing policies. The inquiry found that most of the poor were not public tenants or public owners and that most of the public tenants were not poor' (Australia, House of Representatives 1978a, p. 2631).

### **Hawke and the 1984 CSHA**

The CSHA was again renegotiated, under a new Labor Government, in 1984. The new iteration introduced provisions allowing for a rent-to-purchase program for sitting tenants, on the condition that sold houses be replaced (Legislative Council Select Committee on State Housing 1985, p. 12). According to the new Federal Minister the program would

provide a safety net to both public housing tenants and those renting privately who wish to purchase but are uncertain about their financial ability to do so. To achieve this, title of the dwelling will remain with the housing authority. Thus, in a case where the purchaser does get into financial difficulty the household can remain securely in that dwelling' (Australia, House of Representatives 1984a, pp. 1223-1224).

According to the Minister, the intention of the changes to the CSHA was 'to alleviate housing related poverty and to ensure that housing assistance is, as far as possible, delivered equitably to persons resident in different forms of housing'. Government would increase supply 'to a level commensurate with the need for it in the community', but it would do so in a way which '[avoids] the stigma and related problems so frequently associated with past housing assistance. All housing Ministers agree that it is essential to provide a viable and diversified choice of public housing' (pp. 1222-1223). Another Labor MP described the CSHA as 'the major vehicle by which the public housing sector will be redeveloped as a viable alternative tenure choice' (1984a, p. 1101).

The 1984 CSHA also reintroduced cost rents (Housing Department 1984b), with the Labor Government presenting this reform as undoing 'the market rent philosophy espoused in 1981

by the Fraser Government' (Australia, House of Representatives 1984b, p. 1101). Market rents were 'regressive' (1984c, p. 1298). They had been 'imposed'

explicitly to ration the available public housing stocks because that Government was not going to build them; it was going to force these people out on to the streets and into expensive rents; it did not care. This had the effect of turning public housing into welfare housing. Public housing is not welfare housing; it is public housing. There are hundreds of thousands of Australian families who need public housing right now at cost rents (p. 1297).

### **Effects: the CSHA as discourse**

If the CSHA in this period is to be read as a political instrument in which discourse can be 'invested' (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 75-76), then what are the discourses which were invested in it? Or, to narrow down the focus, within these discourses, how is 'public housing' defined and what position does it occupy in relation to other objects and subjects? In his retrospective account of his Government's program, Gough Whitlam (1985, pp. 448-450) himself identified the 'key characteristic' of the Whitlam Government's housing policy as 'a more benevolent attitude towards the victims of economic crisis, the socially underprivileged'. During the Parliamentary debates on the 1973 CSHA discussed above, it was evident that such 'benevolence' involved the provision of 'modest' housing to people deemed to 'need' it, housing which would function both as shelter and as a trigger for aspiration to something better. Inherent in the intended practice described by Government members in Parliament is the conflation of 'public housing' as a discursive object with the 'modesty' of the material dwelling, and the assumption that 'modesty' is a permanent state of being for a building. That is, should a tenant 'desire' something better, this would not be obtained by making 'improvements' to the dwelling and grounds, as envisaged by the discursive practice of the Tasmanian Housing Department's rent-to-purchase program, but by moving to another dwelling of a less 'modest' form. The boundaries of the public housing object, therefore, were established in part by the limits of 'modesty'. The conflation worked both ways — within this discourse, there is space for the statement that 'modest' housing equates to public housing and poverty, while double garages and rumpus rooms equate to ownership and 'affluence'. The 'modest' public housing dwelling also served as an instrument of government: 'underprivileged' subjects would be governed through their time in public housing; their 'modest' dwelling would act 'benevolently' upon 'underprivileged' bodies to produce affluent and aspirational subjects.

When it negotiated the replacement CSHA in 1978, the new conservative Federal Government organised the discursive field according to categories of assistance provided and received. Home purchasers were assigned equivalent status regardless of which sector they were purchasing in and thus required 'equal' treatment, while the 'seriously disadvantaged' and

those ‘on high incomes’ were classified as different, and therefore as requiring different types of treatment. Public housing — or more precisely, the object of public housing that had been described and criticised by Henderson — operated as a site in which these clean categories were disrupted. Because it mixed together the wealthy and the poor in a site in which they should not be mixed, it became disorderly and problematic. It required reform to normalise the match between service and recipient; this normalisation would be achieved by the application of market forces, seen as a proxy for the precise correlation of required service to appropriate recipient.

Moving to the mid-1980s, the rhetoric of Labor Government members implies a rejection of public housing as a category of ‘welfare’, as does the suggestion that public housing become an ‘alternative tenure choice’. But this rhetoric is at odds with the introduction of the rent-to-purchase program, which was explicitly designed to support people living in that ‘alternative’ to choose to change their status. The practice, as opposed to the rhetoric, constructs the ‘choice’ of public housing as one which would be made only by those without the capacity to ‘choose’ home ownership. It is a practice consistent with that expressed within the National Housing Strategy, produced in the early 1990s by the same Government (though under a different leader in Paul Keating), in which social housing<sup>24</sup> is presented as a means by which ‘those people who may not be able to be home owners... can, in the interests of social justice, enjoy some of the attributes that home ownership offers’ (National Housing Strategy 1992, p. 31). Public housing in this form of discourse is placed in perpetual relation to home ownership, but the terms of that relationship are that it occupies the status of a less-desirable stand-in, a form of compensation to be delivered as decently as possible to those subjects confined to it by their inability to live elsewhere.

Returning to the Tasmanian case, to what extent can evidence of these invested discourses be read in the archive? To begin with, the ‘tenancy only’ policy introduced by the 1973 CSHA was problematic because, as the Director indicated in his 1979 annual report, ‘[l]arge, entirely tenanted estates are considered to be socially undesirable’ (Lockhart 1979, p. 29). The removal of the restriction in 1978 was limited in its effect because although the Department was still constructing the homes, it was no longer controlling the way in which they were sold. Because the sales were ‘for cash’, applicants had to obtain the money to finance their purchases from the Agricultural Bank (Department of Housing and Construction 1982g). Similarly, the

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<sup>24</sup> This use of the term ‘social housing’ as an umbrella term for ‘public’ and ‘community’ housing represents an interesting and potentially significant change in terminology. However, the term was not used at all in the Tasmanian archival documents I examined. In the archive, the more critical shift seems to have involved the adoption of the term ‘welfare housing’ to refer to Housing Department dwellings. This occurred from around the mid-1970s, and might have been linked to the increased targeting introduced under the 1973 CSHA. The term ‘community housing’ seems to have been used primarily to refer to cooperative housing models.

1984 provisions allowing a rent-to-purchase program (operationalised in Tasmania in April 1985 with the Home Purchase Scheme) did not substantially change this. Information supplied to the federal Parliament in the second reading speech for the enabling legislation indicates that, ‘in order to maintain the stock of public rental dwellings, rental housing assistance funds will not be allowed to be used to finance rental purchases. These purchases will, instead, be financed in the same way as other assistance for home purchase under the Agreement’ (Australia, House of Representatives 1984a, pp. 1223-1224). Thus the delineation between the Department’s rental and home purchase arms was reinforced.

The second aspect of ‘invested’ discourse discussed above is the changes to rental policy incorporated into the 1978 and 1984 CSHAs. According to Tulloch (1979, p. 119), ‘market’ rents were higher than ‘economic’ rents because of ‘the preferential rates of interest under which state housing is constructed and maintained’. In 1978, the focus of federal Labor criticism was on the ‘hardship’ that market rents would create for tenants. The former Labor Minister for Urban and Regional Development, Tom Uren, argued that the concept had

an artificial meaning in an economy where funds for housing are severely restricted from time to time because of the requirements of short term management of the economy. These restrictions of monetary policy have reduced the availability of housing funds as well as pushing up their costs. This has limited the amount of rental housing available in the private sector and as a consequence has pushed up rents in the private market (Australia, House of Representatives 1978a, p. 2627).

However, tenants deemed unable to afford the market rent attached to a property still received a rebate. In the first year of the market rent scheme, rebate costs in Tasmania increased from \$1.7 million to \$2.7 million (Department of Premier and Cabinet 1982, p. 21, see also Figure 4.1 below). In 1979, the rebate formula was revised to make it ‘more equitable’; the changes left most tenants ‘better off’ (Lockhart 1979, p. 28), implying ‘more equitable’ also meant ‘more generous’. By 1980, the annual cost of rebates was \$4.3 million and the proportion of tenants receiving rebates also increased; having fluctuated between 39% and 44% of all tenancies between 1974 and 1978, it rose to 54% in 1979, and then again to 57% in 1980 (Department of Premier and Cabinet 1982, p. 21).

Cost rents were reintroduced by the Hawke Government in 1984 on the basis that the ‘market rent concept’ made public tenants ‘subject to the vagaries and speculative activity of the private rental market’. Cost rents, set according to ‘the cost of the provision and operation of public housing’ were ‘fair, equitable and understandable’ (Australia, House of Representatives 1984d, p. 1468). The Minister predicted that ‘[o]ver the life of the Agreement this [cost rents] should result in a decline in real terms in the level of rents for public housing which will provide long term tenants with some of the benefits of home ownership’ (1984b, p. 1223). But in Tasmania, cost rents meant rent increases. The Department indicated that it would introduce



the new method over a five year period ‘to ensure that no tenant will be expected to pay more under the cost rent formula than would have been paid under the previous market rent formula’ (Sproule 1986a, p. 15). The first increase was introduced in August 1985. For most tenants — about 70% — it was covered by an increase in the rebate contribution (1986b, p. 15).

In earlier sections of this chapter I discussed ‘economic rent’ as the product of a specific discursive practice and as an object of discourse. The ‘economic rent’ was congruent with the fair value of the property being rented, its ‘fairness’ established by the self-evidently rational and reasonable way it was calculated and its ‘value’ by a process of constructing the property which incorporated the provision of facilities and features that would not normally be available for the price. Among the discursive effects of this congruence was the positioning of ‘economic rent’ in close relation not just with the house itself but with the process of its construction. Changes in the assumptions underpinning the rental calculation did not greatly disturb these relations.

The introduction of ‘market’ rents, however, did. Carter (1980, p. 19), a contemporary economic analyst writing in 1980, linked the introduction of market rents in Australia to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (1975) and the Whitlam Government’s Priorities Review Staff (1975) for greater efficiency and equity in the provision of public subsidies through the replacement of dwelling-based subsidies with individual subsidies. This was certainly the political claim made by the Federal Government, which argued that market rents would encourage people who didn’t really need public housing to move out, while those who did need it would be protected by rental rebates. However, as Carter (1980, p. 20) pointed out,

[t]he term “market rents” is a misnomer. A full application of the concept would be a contradiction in terms, that is, public dwelling rents would have to be set according to the prices consumers were willing to pay for them. They would therefore vary for individual dwellings according to location and condition. What has actually been introduced is an average rent across a wide area... for each category of unit... related to the average price for similar accommodation in the private market. “Related to” has not been interpreted to mean “equal to”, but rather “somewhat less than”, while the degree to which rents can be raised still reflects perceived political constraints.

Therefore, the ‘market rent’ was not a ‘market rent’, but an administrative proxy for a market rent. The Housing Department in Tasmania, for example, used assessed annual values to allocate its rental properties into one of five ‘groups’, with group A containing ‘the best houses’ and group E ‘the least desirable’ (Department of Housing and Construction 1981e). I would argue that the overall effect of the introduction of ‘market’ rents was not to establish genuinely ‘market’ forces within the public housing system, but to map that system upon a

market ‘grid of specification’ (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 45-47, 55-59) — that is, to organise the discursive matter of public housing according to the market. The ‘market rent’ was related to the value of the property, but it was not a value established by internal processes of cost calculation and construction. In practice it was a value ascertained through an established process of government land and property valuations. But discursively, the ‘market’ rent was placed in relation to another discursive formation, the discourse of the ‘market’, which had its own discursive rules. The objects and subjects which emerge from market discourse are respectively defined within that discourse as ‘products’ and ‘consumers’. The ‘market’ rent, therefore, established public housing as a ‘product’ in the wider housing market. This undermined the qualitative separation between private tenure and public tenure, and therefore, the discursive claim that public tenure offered something that the private market did not.

The re-introduction of cost rents could reasonably be assumed then to be a kind of discursive reset, re-establishing the discursive relations produced by the practice of calculating the ‘economic’ cost of housing. Certainly this was the claim advanced at a federal political level — as noted above, the Labor Government portrayed the reintroduction of cost rents as an overturning of the previous Coalition Government’s hardship-creating ‘market rent philosophy’. The Tasmanian Public Tenants’ Association (c. 1986, p. 58) claimed (in what also functions as a claim to a particular subjectivity) that community housing providers and tenants’ groups ‘have always supported’ cost over market rents because they are non-profit and related to the actual cost of provision rather than ‘to the scarcity of homes for rental’.

But the argument that ‘cost’ rents equated to the removal of the speculative influence of the market and a return to affordability for tenants was inconsistent with the reality in Tasmania. As the Public Tenants’ Association (c. 1986, p. 60) also acknowledged, ‘[i]n Tasmania, “cost rents” work out more expensive than “market rents”’, because most of Tasmanian’s public rental properties were newer, more expensive dwellings, the older, cheaper ones having been sold under purchase contract. According to the Legislative Council Select Committee on State Housing (1985, p. 12), writing at around the same time, cost rents ‘may’ mean lower rents in future. All of this suggests a more complicated discursive effect than simply reverting to ‘how it was before’.

## The contractual relationship under pressure

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### The rental relationship on the ground

In this chapter, I have emphasised the central place of rent, and the payment of rent, in producing and sustaining the contractual relationship between the Department and its tenants. Up until 1978, the centre of this relationship was the ‘economic rent’. As a self-evident fact, the ‘economic rent’ was not perceived by the Department to be at all problematic. But the welfare officers’ reports of the 1960s provide indirect evidence that the object of the ‘economic rent’ was in fact a contested one.

In early 1966, economic rents on Departmental homes were increased. One of the welfare officers returned from leave to discover that a petition of protest signed by a number of tenants had been presented to the local Member of Parliament. Noting that ‘[u]nfortunately I was not in time to prevent this’, the officer explained that she had called personally on four of the signatories, one of whom gave her the name of the petition’s ‘instigator’. She also described a conversation with another, who had on

previous occasions expressed the opinion that they were fortunate to rent such a good home at such a reasonable figure and would never consider purchasing for this reason. When I reminded Mrs. [—] of this, she was quite honest and agreed that they were being greedy and considered that most other signatories would have signed for the same reason (Housing Department 1966n).

This account portrays without ambiguity the welfare officer’s position on the issue. But further commentary on this incident, and associated discussion in other welfare reports, though filtered through the welfare officers’ subjectivity, suggests that for most tenants, rent increases were conceptualised differently, in terms of an exchange between them and the Department. That is, the Department could increase rents, but tenants expected that in return, the Department would carry out maintenance on their homes. Thus a welfare officer commented that ‘[t]here was a general enquiry re painting of the interior of the homes, *but apart from that* all accepted the rise with very good grace’ (Housing Department 1966s, my emphasis), while another suggested that requests for maintenance were opportunistic — ‘those who are really worried’ about the increase were pensioners and people unable to work due to illness (1966e). Another noted with some disapproval that since the increase, ‘tenants have decided not to paint their homes but wait for the Department to do the work’ (1966q). Just a few months later, this officer stated in relation to the increase that ‘most [tenants] have now forgotten about it’ (1966k), and observed that a number of the tenants who had said they now expected the Department to do their painting had ‘in several cases’ commenced the work themselves (1966b).

As well as demonstrating contrasting views of the rental relationship on the part of tenants and welfare officers, this incident also underlines the important point that rent-setting did not, of course, take place in a purely discursive realm. Rents were real, in that real people paid real money to the Department, and those people's capacity to pay, initially and on an ongoing basis, was determined by matters outside the Department's control. In 1968, for example, another of the welfare officers complained that

rentals at our new subdivisions ... are out of reach for the low income group which we are supposed to build for. The cost of the rent of a home should not exceed one third of the family man's income, but between \$14 and \$15 a week is well above one third of the present basic wage. As there will always be people on the basic wage, we will just have to find a way to make housing available to these people according to their income, otherwise there will be problems from the beginning for the Department (Housing Department 1968d).

These comments generated a handwritten note at the foot of the report from another officer, asking how many applicants or tenants were on basic wages, and a typed response from the welfare officer, who reported that there were currently 83 new applications from people on incomes of between \$36 and \$39 per week, 16 of whom had three or more children.

### **The rebate is a burden**

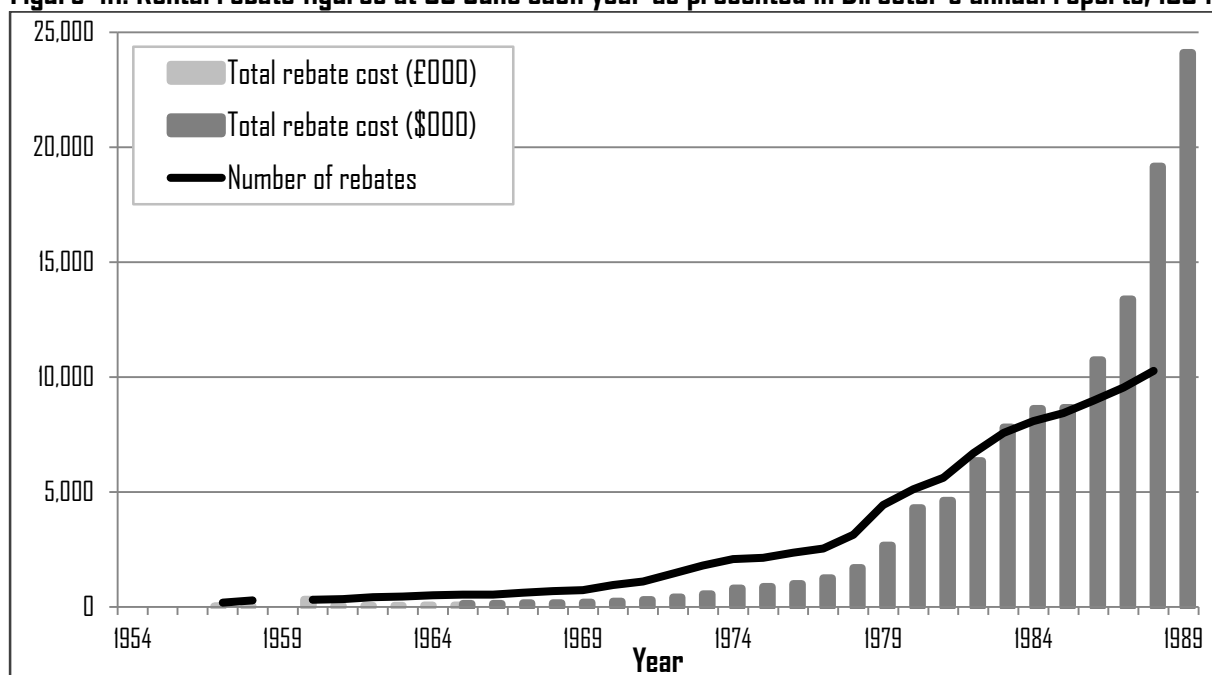
McNelis (2005) has argued that much of Australian housing policy is explicable by the fact that in Australia, rental policy is expected to undertake two contradictory functions: to provide sufficient revenue with which to fund the system and to provide affordability for the tenants who live in the housing. McNelis' analysis fits with the discussion of discursive relations in this chapter. The discursive object of the 'economic rent', which functioned as the foundation upon which the contractual relationship between the Department and its occupants rested, was premised on full cost recovery. The introduction of rebated rents for those tenants who could not afford the full economic cost of their housing problematised this. Increasingly, this problematisation allowed the emergence of a particular discursive object which can be somewhat clumsily characterised as the 'rebate-as-a-burden'.

This new discursive object came to dominate the discourse of tenancy management, in that increasingly that discourse became solely about rebates, and increasingly, 'rebates' were only discussed as a problem. This is not to say that rebates were until this point regarded with universal enthusiasm. As early as 1959, the Director of Housing described them as imposing an increasing financial 'burden' (Duke 1959, p. 11). But rebates were nonetheless, along with other policy settings, considered an appropriate response to a recognised problem, albeit one that caused problems for the administering authority. As the same Director of Housing had pointed out the following year, 'the legislation which I administer is directed towards the

provision of housing for persons in the lower income groups — the margin between whose income and living costs is almost negligible’ (1960, p. 17).

In the archive, the ‘rebate-as-a-burden’ is described in statistics: the number of rebates in operation, the total annual cost, the distribution of active rebates by income type and the average rebate payment per tenant. According to the Director’s 1979 report to Parliament, for example, at 30 June of that year there were 4427 rebates in operation, accounting for more than half of the Department’s tenants, at a total annual cost of \$2.66 million and an average cost per rebate of \$601. Of the recipients, 1345 were age pensioners, 1655 were widows and deserted wives, 486 were invalid pensioners, 179 were war pensioners, 521 were on unemployment or sickness benefits and 241 were in the ‘other’ category (Lockhart 1979, p. 28). A more vivid picture of the rebate ‘burden’ is provided in Figure 4.1 (see below). Presented thus, rebates are defined solely in terms of size and cost, and ‘size’ and ‘cost’ are normatively understood as more problematic the larger they are. The discursive space which is occupied by the ‘rebate-as-a-burden’ has no room to include recognition of the qualitative and quantitative roles rebates might play in alleviating financial hardship for their recipients.

**Figure 4.1: Rental rebate figures at 30 June each year as presented in Director’s annual reports, 1954-1989**



The cost of providing them is certainly one reason why rebates came to be perceived as a burden. However, I do not think the emergence of the ‘rebate-as-a-burden’ as a discursive object is explicable solely in budgetary terms. The cumulative effect of the Department’s discursive practice of treating all its occupants the same but nonetheless treating tenancy as an aberration was to conflate ‘occupants’ with ‘purchasers’, and to therefore position the ‘tenant’

as subordinate and abnormal. And because the relationship between ‘tenants’ and ‘rebates’ was discursively identified as absolute and exclusive, then ‘rebates’ too occupied this subordinate position. This became increasingly untenable as rebated tenancies became increasingly common — but for rebates and tenancies to be ‘normal’ or ‘usual’, for this to be possible (or sayable) within the discourse, a different set of relations would have needed to exist. The constraint preventing their development was produced by the discursive practice of the Department’s commitment to home ownership which was directed at promoting the availability of home ownership as widely as possible. This practice depended for its legitimacy on discursively-produced knowledge that home ownership was the normal preference of occupants. As rebate numbers increased, the effect of this discursive constraint was that the ‘rebate-as-a-burden’ undermined the contract between the Department and its occupants by rendering aspects of the central organising principle of that relationship (the payment of rent) somehow illegitimate and certainly problematic.

### **The burden reframed**

The rental position was further problematised by the economic conditions which prevailed during the 1970s. As early as 1971, ‘spiralling’ costs meant that economic rents were now ‘an impossible burden for the low income earner, who forms a majority of the clientele of the Department’ (Allwinton 1971, p. 3). There were also implications for the rebate system. In 1974, when weekly rebate payments per tenant rose from \$5.86 the previous year (1973, p. 16) to \$7.42, the Director pointed to ‘the economic circumstances of the community, particularly in respect of unemployment and low incomes’ and to the rising cost of construction and maintenance, all of which increased the gap between what was affordable and what was ‘economic’ (1974, p. 13). In 1977, an 8% increase in the number of rebates was attributed to the near doubling of the number of recipients on unemployment or sickness benefits (Lockhart 1977, p. 22). By 1980, figures presented in the annual report showed that two thirds of all applicants for assistance relied on pensions and benefits as their main source of income (1980, p. 61).

Overlaying the discursive practice of the Housing Department in this period was a profound concern among senior officers about the Department’s overall financial situation. This concern, and the procedures and techniques into which that concern was directed, shaped Departmental practice in other areas, including in the area of the government of tenancies and the tenancy relationship. At this point in time, the Department received three annual contributions from consolidated revenue: reimbursement of its operating loss from the previous year, an allocation to cover the cost of providing rental rebates (which it no longer had to repay), and an additional allocation provided as a contribution to the maintenance program. The maintenance contribution was relatively small, but the size of the other two

contributions was burgeoning; according to one set of figures, the operating loss contribution and the rebate contribution increased from \$1.4 million and \$1.2 million respectively in 1976-77 to \$4.1 million and \$4.7 million respectively by 1980-81 (Department of Housing and Construction 1981h).

The increasing size of the total concerned Treasury. In a January 1981 memo, the Under-Treasurer stated:

For some time, the Treasury has been seriously concerned at the rapidly escalating cost of Housing operations to the State. The increased cost is many times greater than either the rate of inflation or the expansion of total Budget expenditure, and it is clearly a significant factor in the State's very difficult current financial situation. The Treasury's concern is even greater because State Housing has virtually no effect on the Budget of any of the other States, where rental rebates are offset against rents received and the whole operations are self-supporting (Department of Housing and Construction 1981g).

Although the Director of Housing refuted the latter claim (1981f), the Under-Treasurer repeated it, and the other points, six months later, along with the claim that '[o]perating losses of the magnitude incurred by the Division [i.e. the Department] in recent years suggest that there is some fundamental weakness in the principles upon which the Division operates so far as its rental housing is concerned'. It was 'essential' to consider the issue against the Department's 'annual financial results and the total effect on the State's budget'. He called for the Government to adopt 'as firm financial objectives, the elimination of the Housing Division's annual loss and the substantial reduction of rental rebates payable. This can only be achieved by higher rents together with a firmer rebate policy'. He went on to provide 'the following salient points' — that 60% of tenants were on rebates; that rebates presently accounted for 36% of receivable rents and this proportion was expected to grow; that rebate numbers had increased since June 1980 'at a weekly cost of approximately \$90,000 per annum'; and that Tasmania provided 'nearly twice' the number of rebates per capita as did other states (1981h).

These interventions repositioned the Department's management of its own financial situation as a matter for the State Budget as a whole. Rents, and rebates, were the central issue. According to the Department, it was the lack of regular rent increases which now forced it to use capital funds to offset its revenue deficit (Annells et al. 1981, p. 4; Sproule 1981, p. 24). According to Treasury, the rising cost of rental rebates — up 175% in three years — was attributable to the fact that 'the State Housing Scheme is becoming more and more a welfare function ... oriented towards housing the indigent', and the formula needed to be less generous and more in line with that offered by other state housing authorities. The Under-Treasurer pre-empted claims that winding back the rebate would create hardship for low income earners by stating that 'it should be remembered that pensions are now indexed and

pensioners enjoy many benefits such as free transport, subsidised power, \$5 per week rental allowance, reduced telephone rent and free medical services' (Department of Housing and Construction 1981h). Despite the differences over the attribution of blame and the scale of the increase needed, there was a commonality in the views of the Department and the Treasury — that the problem facing the Department was one of inadequate revenue, that 'rent' was primarily, perhaps entirely, a source of revenue, and that increases were therefore the obvious response to a revenue shortfall.

Rental increases, however, had to be approved by Cabinet, and Cabinet was initially reluctant to take any action until forced to do so in the context of the June 1981 Budget 'razor gang' review (see p. 144 below). There was similar political reluctance evident in relation to another attempt by the Department at revenue-raising. This attempt was directed at those who still had purchase contracts with the Department, and although Cabinet rejected the idea (Department of Housing and Construction 1981b), the proposal itself indicates that by this point, the Department's original purchasers were no longer to be regarded as members of a wider government housing community. Instead, they were now being constructed as unfairly privileged in comparison to renters.

In September 1981, the Department put a submission to Cabinet requesting agreement to the Department taking steps to recover some of the \$50 million currently outstanding on purchase contracts (and some of the \$35 million owed to the Agricultural Bank) by reducing the contract length, changing the interest rate or increasing instalment amounts. The submission noted that incomes had increased 'considerably' since these people had entered their purchase contracts, and that many could afford to pay higher instalments than they were currently paying. The only increase in instalments over time was the 'marginal' increase resulting from revisions in municipal rates, and rents for Departmental properties were now 'far in excess of instalments', which were generally less than \$25 a week compared to current market rents in Hobart of \$50. The status quo was 'inequitable because older, better established families are required to pay considerably less than young people struggling to rent or purchase their home' (Department of Housing and Construction 1981a).

The submission acknowledged the risk of 'adverse political consequences', but suggested increased instalments 'be sold to the public on the grounds of preservation of equity between established families and new families entering the housing market and the need to provide increased funds for housing assistance to others'. Although the Solicitor-General had advised there may be considerable difficulty in such legislation,

recent rental increases have caused some members of the public to point out the inequitable situation that exists between tenants whose rentals are increased regularly and who have no equity and purchasers who have the benefits of both equity and fixed



repayments. With interest rates on private loans increasing rapidly, there should be significant public support for this proposal.

In addition, the Commonwealth would be likely to approve as it was (at that time) requiring market-based rents, and would therefore 'be most happy to see loan repayments move to a more realistic level' (Department of Housing and Construction 1981a).

My argument in relation to both of these points (rent increases and purchase contracts) is that they demonstrate a fundamental shift in the Department's contractual relationship with its tenants. Previously, this relationship was premised around tenants paying a fair price in exchange for a valuable material product, a price that reflected the effort that had been invested in its creation, with a caveat that those tenants whose circumstances genuinely rendered them unable to pay that fair price be provided with concessions. However, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, as the burdens in the Department's budget were repositioned as burdens being carried by the State as a whole, the Department's loyalties were reframed. Its principal commitment was no longer to its tenants but to the rest of the Government, and in the interests of this higher loyalty, the rationale of rent setting shifted. Rents and purchase instalments were now to be set according to what the Department needed to recover, not according to the value of the property, while those tenants paying less than this (due to rebates or due to historical circumstances) were identified as excessively and unfairly privileged. It was no longer legitimate to invest in the Department's tenants any more than the Department absolutely had to.

## **The shrinking of the contract**

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### **A new (?) policy package**

In 1982, the Tasmanian Labor Government, which had been in power for all but three of the preceding 48 years, imploded over the Franklin dam dispute, lost the State election and was replaced by the conservative Liberal Government of Robin Gray. The Gray Government lasted until 1989; its tenure marks a deeply controversial period in Tasmanian history. The proposal to build a dam on the Franklin River produced a massive cleavage in the community, deriving from the conflict between those on the side of the proponent, the powerful government-owned Hydro-Electric Commission, and those supporting the increasingly radicalised environmentalist movement. I mention the issue to make the point that although housing policy is the focus of this thesis, in the early 1980s it was certainly not the most prominent issue in public debate or around the Cabinet table.

The new Government's election platform included an extensive housing policy package (Department of Housing and Construction 1982f; see also 1982i, 1982e); its rationale was indirectly articulated as an intention to support the (private) housing industry, both directly and by assisting 'the average Tasmanian home buyer', holding the Housing Department to account (this was not explicitly stated, but implied in the number of measures designed at modifying the Department's approach to make it more affordable, more supportive of 'choice' and 'flexibility' and more responsive to demand and to the 'needs' of tenants), and deregulation of the planning system (1982e). The initiatives in the package, with some additions over time, served as the scaffolding for the Housing Department's activities over the next seven years. But this does not mean there was a radical change of direction, and for this reason I will not be presenting a detailed analysis of the package. Many of the measures were consistent with the existing direction being taken by the Housing Department, and in the case of those that were not, with the possible, partial exception of a commitment to allow all public housing tenants the option of purchasing their home at a 10% discount (see c. 1982a, 1982g, 1982j, 1982h), the Department's position seems to have prevailed.

## **The basis of the contract changes**

### **Home purchase**

Given that it was a rent-to-purchase program, the Home Purchase Scheme introduced under the provisions of the 1984 CSHA (see p. 104 above) might be seen as returning the Department's practice, in the mid-1980s, to the point where it had started in the 1950s. The Department's annual reports support this point — the statistics on demand that are presented tend in the main to bundle together applications for rental housing and applications for the Home Purchase Scheme to present a single measure of 'demand' for housing assistance.

But in terms of the relative positioning of subjects, the Home Purchase Scheme was qualitatively different. It did not operate at a scale which could displace the rental side of the Department's operations: the annual report for 1986, for example, listed 4398 'applications on hand', of which just 433 were expressions of interest in the Home Purchase Scheme (Sproule 1986b, p. 12). It was also different at the operational level. The onus was on the applicant to make the decision to purchase or rent. It was a specialised program: it did not operate as the default option for anyone applying for housing assistance — in fact, at least two thirds of the Department's housing stock was excluded from the Scheme (1988, p. 11). It was subject to continued modification (Housing Department 1986c, 1986a, 1986b, 1987b, 1987d, 1987c, 1988c, 1988b, 1988a, 1987a); in 1987, for example, the 'option' of buying a private sector dwelling was 'withdrawn' (1987d), and by the end of that year, falling demand led to plans for an 'extensive advertising campaign' (1987c, 1988c). The Scheme extended to sitting tenants, and some tenants did enter public housing with the intention of then applying for purchase (for

example, 1984c), but the Public Tenants' Association (c. 1986, p. 24) actively dissuaded tenants from this, informing them that '[b]uying under this scheme is not such a great thing', pointing to the higher payments (25% of income instead of 20-25% for renters), maintenance responsibilities, and extended loan period of 'many, many years — more than 30', and concluding its argument with the following statement:

The sale of houses under this scheme reduces the Housing Department's stocks, and pushes up the cost rents.... The housing stocks are already far too low, and the rents too high. You may, or may not, be able to keep up repayments and maintenance on the house. You may, or may not, end up owning your own home. You will reduce housing stock and push up the rents.

Thus, while the critical aspect of the discursive practice of the 1950s was the conflation of 'tenant' and 'purchaser' into the 'occupant', albeit while simultaneously treating the 'tenant' as abnormal, the day-to-day practice of the Home Purchase Scheme treated tenants and purchasers as entirely different, and made available the more privileged position of 'purchaser' on a restricted basis. My assessment is that this arose as a result of the 1973 CSHA's sales 'embargo'. One of the effects of the introduction of that restriction was that the Department's development and construction activity became bifurcated between development and sale of land for private building or development of land and construction of housing for public rental (Lyneham et al. 1978, pp. 2-3, 15). The 1978 and 1983 changes do not appear to have altered this; despite the aggregation of demand statistics, the Home Purchase Scheme was treated as quite distinct from the Department's core business of rental housing.

### Rental policy

The reintroduction of cost rents appears to have been overridden by a further rental policy change, one first flagged in early 1983, when the Department indicated that it planned to put a submission to Cabinet which would propose that the Government abolish fixed market rents and rebates, and instead, introduce the Queensland system of income-related rents (Department of Housing and Construction c. 1983). The submission was eventually made, and in May 1988, Cabinet approved a 'new rental scheme whereby all tenants will be required to pay a rental based on income' (Housing Department 1988b). The proportion of income levied would increase with the tenant's income, and so the introduction of income-based rents was expected to encourage high income tenants to move on from public housing by charging them a higher proportion of their income in rent than they would pay in equivalent private housing.

However by 1989, according to the Director's annual report, 38% of applications on hand were from single parent households, and 32% from single people. Most applicants were reliant on income support — 13% were in receipt of the Age Pension and 68% were on 'other

pensions' (Sproule 1989, p. 45). In the same year, out of 12,872 tenants, 9252 paid rents of \$50 or less per week. Only 25 people paid more than \$150 a week (Housing Department 1989). This suggests that, despite the claim that income-based rents would free up stock, few tenants would actually be required to pay more than market rent. Income-related rents functioned as recognition that rebated rents were no longer provisions kept for 'special circumstances' but were more likely the normal situation for many if not most tenants.

But although an 'income-based' rent and a 'rebated' rent may have looked the same to the tenants paying them, they were not calculated or conceptualised in the same way. First, the rebate system still linked rents to properties; that tenants who lived in properties which had a rental value which they could not afford were not required to pay the full amount owing did not disturb this. An income-related rent, however, linked rents directly to the occupant and to the occupant's income, and had no relation to the value of the property. As an effect, rebates no longer existed — and the 'rebate-as-a-burden' disappeared as an object of discourse. But secondly, by paying an economic rent, a tenant effectively paid for the property — for the cost of building and operating it over its economic life; by contrast, an income-based rent paid for the occupancy of the dwelling — for a service being provided by the Department. It did not, however, pay for the full costs of providing that service — with the disappearance of rebates came the disappearance of the corresponding reimbursement from consolidated revenue; the cost of 'estimated rental subsidies' now had to be funded internally with funds diverted from other purposes (Sproule 1989, p. 34). An income-based rent was a flat charge, set at the maximum point at which the consumer could be expected to pay. It carried no connotations of the house itself as a material product of labour or a material object of value, nor, importantly, of the house as a permanent home.

## Gardens

The Liberals' 1982 policy platform had included a commitment to estate 'beautification', a term which recalled the Department's focus on gardens and tree-planting in the 1960s. However, in the 1980s, a different terminology applied. Rather than the promotion of 'gardening', the Department undertook 'landscaping'. 'Landscaping', as described in the annual reports from this period, was 'integral' and 'essential', and assisted in 'establishing the value of the Division's properties and providing attractive housing conditions' (Sproule 1982, p. 19). To assist its landscaping activities, the Department had its own nursery, offered landscaping services to other government departments and operated a statewide plant allocation scheme, enabling residents of the Department's estates to obtain up to 20 free plants each, including five trees (1981, p. 16).

In 1985, the Department reported that it had streamlined, realigned and broadened its landscaping activities. For example, in response to its increased involvement in infill development and to improve the level of 'tenant acceptance', the nursery list had been reviewed and propagation of exotic plants increased (Sproule 1986a, p. 15). As plants matured in broadacre areas, activities there were scaled back. There is little discussion in these years of individual gardens; the emphasis is on providing recreational areas and integrating streetscapes and reserve areas in infill developments (1986b, p. 14). By 1989, landscaping was effectively a tool for reputation management and marketing, and specifically, a way to deflect negative reactions from the residents of 'private' areas — the landscaping branch's section in the Department's annual report for that year observed that 'soft' landscaping (paving, fencing and design) was 'essential' everywhere, but 'all the more significant' in infill developments, while the provision of an increased proportion of private sale lots in the Department's new developments required a 'more detailed finish' to 'enhance the sales potential' (1989, p. 23).

The concern with landscaping could be interpreted as continuity, with the efforts to make infill developments appear attractive linking back to the welfare officers' efforts to achieve the same outcome for broadacre estates. But there is a marked difference between the two practices. Armstrong (2009, p. 3) concludes a review of a book (Holmes, Martin & Mirmohamadi 2008) about the history of Australian gardens with a pithy statement of the book's concluding argument: 'We don't garden anymore, we landscape'. The difference between gardening and landscaping has implications for the contractual relationship between the Department and its tenants. The welfare officers had sought to modify tenants' behaviour in the service of the appearance of the estate, and had used their own knowledge and expertise as part of those efforts, but the work itself was done by the tenants and was done to improve their own homes, as indicated by one of the welfare reports, in which the officer reported that she had '[t]alked to several families, pointing out the increased value they add to their home, by making the exterior more attractive' (Housing Department 1968j). It offered a mutually beneficial project around which daily interaction between welfare officers and tenants could be organised and maintained. By contrast, the landscaping division's efforts were not oriented at 'adding value' to the homes of individual tenants, or towards encouraging those tenants to make of their homes and estates 'show places to the community' (Allwinton 1974, p. 4). They were instead oriented at the objective of camouflage. For example, the Department (not the occupants) undertook upgrades to the gardens of homes which had been spot-purchased 'to bring them up to an equivalent standard with other homes in the street'. Overall, the goal of 'landscaping' was to '[achieve] greater anonymity for the Department's tenants' (Sproule 1985, pp. 13-14).

## **Knowing public housing differently**

From these disparate discursive practices, and out of the relationships between the objects and subjects of the discourse expressed by these practices, emerged a changed form of knowledge. The effect of the Home Purchase Scheme, income-related rents and landscaping was to remake the Department's function within the discourse. These practices, as had previous practice, positioned home ownership as desirable beyond all other forms of tenure. But crucially, it was a form of tenure that was no longer the core business of the Department. Instead, the Department was responsible solely for the provision of rental housing, and rental housing was marked out, by its exceptional rental arrangements and by the effort undertaken in the cause of camouflage, as inherently inferior. The reformulation of rental policy, which disaggregated the basis of rent setting from the process of building the home, further established this rental housing as a service to be provided only for the duration of need.

In the 1980s, the tenant subject was either to be converted into a home owner through the provision of generous incentives, and, if these were ignored, driven into it through financial penalty, or was to be concealed within an environment purposefully designed to appear like any other environment. In the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, home ownership had been normal and tenancy an aberration reserved for those who needed a rebate. In the 1980s, this was still the case; the introduction of income-related rents merely formalised this. But in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, those on purchase contracts had been as much public housing 'tenants' as those on tenancy agreements, and estates were not just identifiable, but were to be beautiful. In the 1980s, those on purchase contracts were no longer the core concern of the Department — the introduction of income-related rents was explicitly designed to push those not in need of rebates out of the system and out of the Department's field of interest — and the management of those on tenancy agreements was successful when the tenants were not identifiable as tenants and the housing they lived in looked just like private housing. These changed modes of practice both formed and reinforced an emergent knowledge: that public housing was intrinsically undesirable — for governments, for tenants and, increasingly, for the wider community.

# CHAPTER 5: THE ESTATE

## Introduction

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In this chapter, I explore those sections of the archive which trace the history of the Department as a builder of homes. Throughout its 35 years as an independent agency, the Department's principal role involved the construction of residential housing, and its work practices were directed towards that goal. However, as I demonstrate, changes in these practices expose shifts in the discourse which produced them. I identify two significant shifts in particular. First, and related also to the developments described in Chapter 3, the direct relationship between the Department and 'the estate' was dislodged from its privileged position within the discourse, and reformulated; the Department's primary discursive relationship was now with the individuals who lived on the estate, rather than the geographically and discursively situated estate itself. Secondly, the estate, as an object of pride, improvement and refinement, was replaced by a new discursive object, the failed broadacre estate, an entity which was damaged, damaging and a problem to be palliated. The effect was that the Department's legacy — the estates that existed around and about the urban centres of Tasmania — was now associated within the discourse with shame, characterised as a mistake that should have been foreseen and which was not to be repeated, and an ongoing burden for future governments and welfare providers to manage but never truly resolve.

The Department's earlier role as subdivider and home-builder was built on an assertion of technical expertise obtained through specialist knowledge and, equally importantly, through practical experience. This expertise was deployed both to resolve the post-war housing crisis and to contribute to the post-war development of Tasmania's economy. The focus was on producing, in new estates, homes in which people would settle permanently, as part of a wider strategy of building the scaffolding for Tasmania's industrial and social future, and the expectation was that enough housing would be built to accommodate everyone who needed it. The Department's desire was to build through contract labour, but this proved unworkable in the south of the state, and with some ambivalence the Department employed its own labour force. This labour force soon became integral to the production of public housing in the southern region.

The built form of that housing, the broadacre estate, was visually distinct from other forms of housing. As shown in Chapter 4 and expanded in this chapter, the Department sought to repackage this distinctiveness in a form to be envied and emulated throughout the community.

However, criticisms of the broadacre persisted, reinforced by external discourses valorising mixed communities, and this modified the object of the broadacre, so that it became less an object of technical processes and more one of social processes. That is, what had been technical defects in layout, design and servicing were reinterpreted as social concerns with the potential to cause problems for residents — an outcome linked to the remaking of residents *as* problems. When this rewriting of the broadacre was added to the discursive outcome of the financial pressures described in Chapter 4, the broadacre and the day labour force as an efficient means of producing it were destabilised. It was no longer possible to ‘know’ the broadacre positively. The broadacre as an object of discourse was replaced by the ‘failed broadacre’, an object constituted by a particular understanding of history in which its production, as performed by the Housing Department, was reinterpreted as a mistake.

## **The Housing Department as a builder of homes**

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### **Asserting and defending the Department’s expertise**

The archive shows that during the 1940s and 1950s, the state housing authority started to lay claim to a privileged expertise in the area of home building. This expertise included the authority to define for the Tasmanian context a series of objects which still have a place in the discourse of housing production today: prefabrication, efficiencies, materials, labour, finance. Although these objects do have a non-discursive form — bricks, for example, have a material existence independent of discourse — they are also constituted discursively. Thus bricks are objectified within the discourse as a preferred building material — ‘the most satisfactory type of walling’ (Adams 1947a, p. 49) — and in turn, this preference conditions perceptions of homes which are built solely from timber, as most of the early public housing was (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1947b, p. 9).

The ‘thinking’ of the early discursive practice of the public housing program was marked by belief in the potential for scientific and technological advancement to deliver housing faster and more cheaply. The Commonwealth Housing Commission called for a building research station to be established to collect together expertise in ‘modern methods’, such as ‘new methods of prefabrication, new materials... and mass production’, and saw concrete-based construction as offering particular potential (Slum Abolition League 1943b; Commonwealth Housing Commission 1944, pp. 83-84). Such experimentation ‘[would] bring exact science to bear on the old rule of thumb methods of the past’ (Commonwealth Housing Commission 1944, p. 84). The Slum Abolition League files contain an extensive collection of articles taken from various periodicals outlining the potential of concrete, and the League’s campaign material includes calls for the Government to make greater use of concrete to resolve the housing



shortage (for example, Slum Abolition League 1940d, 1940b, 1940c, 1941e, 1941g, 1941b, 1942e, 1940h, 1940f, 1940g, 1940i, 1941j). Thus the League claimed that

[t]he Victorian Housing Commission has proved that clean sound and durable homes can be built of concrete, 10% cheaper than brick, if there are 20 or more in the same vicinity. There is no trouble from rot, rats or rough treatment with the furniture. They are fire-proof, damp-proof and as good an insulator as a cavity brick-wall. The system provides for ample variety in styles as well as economy. It uses local materials of which there is an abundance (1942e; also 1940b, 1940g).

The Agricultural Bank, however, had a different position on this and other advances. In 1947 SR Adams, the Bank's chairman and managing director, gave evidence to a joint Parliamentary committee on home building. As part of his evidence, he reviewed the potential for prefabrication and substitute materials as a way to reduce costs — and the reasons why it might not be so easy in post-war Tasmania. For example, making wider use of concrete was difficult because there were inadequate supplies of the necessary sand, metal and reinforcing steel, because Tasmania's limited economies of scale made investment in new equipment uneconomic, and because available methods of concrete-based prefabrication had been of dubious success (Adams 1947a, pp. 51-54). The degree of detail contained in Adams' (1947a, 1947b) account of this and the other issues that were holding up the post-war building program — the shortage of labour, the limited supplies of some essential materials and the widespread industrial disruption that was inhibiting the manufacture and shipping of others — both asserted the Bank's status as a speaking subject in possession of direct expertise and explicated the gap between the performance to date of the Bank and the expectations in the community in a way that was consistent with this status.

The 'acting' component of this discursive practice was carried out by the Agricultural Bank through experimentation with new forms of housing production. But progress was not straightforward. In 1948, the Board's annual report indicated that although prefabrication was 'becoming more generally acceptable' and more widely used,

the cost factor has not been reduced but rather increased. It is now generally recognised that the only beneficial result achieved by prefabrication is a slightly greater speed in construction, the use of less skilled "on site" labour in the erection of dwellings, and a saving of time lost through inclement weather conditions by the greater part of the work being carried out in factories (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1948, p. 9).

This problematisation of the discourse of scientific transformation can be read in a number of ways, but I think one of the more pertinent is the assertion of pragmatic technical experience over theoretical claims through the assumption of the subject-position of 'expert' with privileged access to technical knowledge that allows it to see the discourse's deficiencies.

I argue that this claim to privileged technical expertise operated throughout the discourse of the early public housing program as a procedure of control (Foucault 1981 [1970], p. 52). That is, it imposed the requirement that knowledge be produced in a particular way (through experience), and by people in possession of a pre-existing body of practical knowledge (through having been trained in a particular technical discipline), in order to be valid (pp. 55, 59-61). These people acquired within the discourse the 'qualification' to speak — that is, they functioned as what Foucault (pp. 61-62) refers to as a 'society of discourse', with the right to occupy certain sections of discursive practice from which other speaking subjects were excluded or had only restricted access.

A related system of discursive control can be seen in another set of arguments advanced by the Bank. Like arguments about materials and labour shortages, these arguments asserted and protected the expert subject status being claimed while providing a logical explanation for perceived deficiencies in performance. But in this case, they operated not in relation to what the Bank claimed to be expert in (the use of materials and labour to get houses built), but in relation to what it disavowed as its responsibility. In the early 1950s, the Board boasted that in its subdivisions, such works as the laying of roads, footpaths, kerbs and gutters paralleled housing construction, while on the mainland, 'in many instances', houses were built before roads, but it also admitted that activities such as stormwater and sewerage reticulation were a 'retarding factor' (Driscoll, Plummer & Veale 1953a, p. 8; 1953b, p. 7). These latter activities were the responsibility of local government.

In 1954, the newly appointed Director of Housing said that the inability of councils to obtain finance for these works was leading to 'considerable criticism' of the Housing Department. The problem, according to the Director, was that there was not enough developed land 'to meet the demands of a large scale housing programme [*sic*]. As a consequence, the development of new areas is a necessity, and the responsibility of providing the necessary services ... falls upon the local government authority concerned'. When councils did obtain finance, it was usually over a short term with high interest rates, and this affected municipal rates, and therefore rents (Plummer 1954, p. 4). In subsequent reports the Director argued that councils' inability to obtain the funds needed to meet 'normal expansion' arising from ordinary private development, let alone overcome the post-war backlog, rendered 'unrealistic' the Commonwealth's insistence that such services were the sole responsibility of councils. He described it as 'regrettable' that neither long-term public borrowings available via the Loan Council nor CSHA funds could be directed to assist them. Ensuring servicing was complete before homes were built and occupied 'must be fully recognised as an essential to the proper economics of residential areas', but, in an explicit statement of the claim that 'experience

trumps theory', the Director noted that it 'would appear that in this respect practical planning must give way to the ideas of financially-minded theorists' (1956, pp. 4-5; 1958, p. 6).

### **Building homes to drive economic development: ambiguity in the discourse**

According to Thompson (1981, p. 23), since 1914 the 'lynchpin' of Tasmania's small economy has been 'the aggressive marketing of [cheap and abundant] electricity to large industrial consumers'. Since Tasmania produced this electricity through hydro-generation, this policy became known as 'hydro-industrialisation'. The Tasmanian Government targeted energy intensive industries by offering them 'an artificially structured power tariff which provided electricity at one of the world's lowest prices' (Thompson 1981, p. 96) in the hope that these industries would in turn attract smaller companies who would not otherwise bother to establish themselves in a small market like Tasmania, and through this, ensure Tasmania's economic prosperity (Thompson 1981, pp. 15-16).

Such industries required workers and these workers needed housing, a good proportion of which was built by the Agricultural Bank and later, by the Housing Department, and then leased to the industries concerned. The long-term fate of estates built to accommodate the workforces employed in the manufacturing industry has the status of common knowledge in many parts of the world; they are now known as 'rustbelts'. The more immediate implications of these estates, especially in Tasmania, have received less attention.

First, the housing authority was defensive in relation to this issue, which suggests that the program itself was at the time considered controversial. The Board of the Agricultural Bank described its involvement as necessary to support the development of a 'balanced economy' in Tasmania (Adams, Plummer & Veale 1951, p. 8), while on behalf of the Housing Department, the Director of Housing argued that expected levels of industrial expansion in Tasmania 'cannot reach fruition unless proper housing is provided for employees... housing is an essential concomitant of successful industry' (Duke 1960, p. 5). The Department does seem to have been pressed to explain why it provided for some industries but required the employees of others to go through the normal, needs-based allotment system. Its slightly evasive response was that being able to assure prospective employees that housing would be available was critical in attracting industrial development which would contribute in its turn to 'the State's economy and prosperity', and so it therefore gave 'special consideration' to some industries and government agencies. This was 'justified having regard to the overall advantage to the State in increased production and the absorption into the Tasmanian community of additional skilled operatives and specialist personnel' (1965, p. 6).

Secondly, there were specific issues experienced with the program at the estate management level, difficulties which affected the way in which tenants of these homes were positioned within the discourse. Most of the houses were leased to the employer, and then sub-leased to workers. The archival evidence provided by the welfare officer's reports shows that tenants were constituted differently as subjects when they were occupying homes under these 'master tenancy' arrangements. These tenants are repeatedly singled out as resistant to welfare officers' attempts to govern the estate. They were the '[h]ardest tenants to get to make a garden around their homes', the 'untidy' homes were usually theirs, they were 'discontented' and 'appear to have a chip on their shoulders where the Department is concerned', and 'to a number of these tenants, their house is only a place to eat and sleep in' (Housing Department 1965c, 1966g, 1966d, 1968l, 1968a).

In a more detailed account, one of the welfare officers reported that

Master Tenancys [sic] could be a problem, these tenants are not inspected by the Department prior to going into a new home, would it not be better to house these people, who are not known to the Department, in older homes, for example one family had only been in three days and the stove was very dirty and the house dirty. There are seven children and another on the way, an extra person was living in the home. Another family had a brand new home, having previously lived in two of our homes before and once settled in this home on Master Tenancy, wanted to go onto Purchase Contract and then change his job. A third had very little furniture, low standard, never been used to a good home and would have been just as happy in an older type home. Would it not be better to offer the new homes to good tenants who are known to the Department and are on rental, who wish to go onto Purchase Contract and keep the older homes for the unknown tenants (Housing Department 1967h).

The second part of this suggestion has beside it an initialled annotation: 'Very good idea'.

The tenancies of this group of tenants may well have been more unstable; there is evidence that economic downturns which led to retrenchments or reduced working hours in factories affected turnover in the properties (Duke 1962, pp. 8, 13; 1964, p. 8; 1965, p. 6; Housing Department 1968l, 1968c). However, in the welfare reports, this instability is presented as a defining and inherently undesirable characteristic of the tenant subject. In relation to such tenants in Smithton, the district welfare officer commented that

[i]t is noticeable that those who are Tasmanians, have more interest and have started on their grounds but the oversea [sic] & interstate people have done very little. Some are not bothering to furnish the homes, as they intend moving on and furniture and floor coverings would be a nuisance (1968o).

This establishes as desirable a particular form of occupation — 'interest' and permanency characterise the occupancy of a 'good' tenant, while 'not bothering' and the intention to live there only temporarily characterise the occupancy of a 'bad' tenant. The valorisation of 'interest' echoes the welfare officers' use of gardening as a governmental technique (see

Chapter 4), but the introduction of length of residency adds a new dimension. That is, tenants are constituted as subjects according to their temporal relationship with the Department as well as their spatial or material relationship. The preferred form of that temporal relationship is one which is oriented to the long-term.<sup>25</sup>

### **The limits of the building program**

In its 1947 annual report, the Agricultural Bank's Board stated that '[a] general review of the position discloses a story of substitution and adaption [of materials] to meet the pressing need of providing more and more homes' (Adams, Crace-Calvert & Hicks 1947b, p. 6). These substitutions and adaptations did produce consequences. In 1959, the annual report recorded that maintenance work on early rental properties, built in weatherboard and painted with ipoor-quality paint, was now dominated by external repainting (Duke 1959, p. 6). By 1962, 'maintenance of older dwellings [was] having a heavier impact than in the past' (1962, p. 10). In 1964, an employment stimulus grant from the Commonwealth did make possible 'the replacement of some makeshift materials using in the war and immediate post-war period' (1964, p. 9), but in 1970, the maintenance allocation had to be almost doubled due to the 'considerable' renovation needed on properties built in the immediate post-war period (Allwinton 1970, p. 14).

Against these self-evident and enduring material consequences, the post-war assertion by the Department of the expertise, knowledge and capacity which allowed it to cope in the face of post-war shortages is presented by the standard account of public housing history as the dominance of building professionals among housing authority personnel. For example, Hayward (1996, p. 22) argues that the replacement of 'the liberal reformers who had been so influential in establishing the first SHAs ... by engineers, builders and architects, with a very different set of objectives and concerns, foremost among which was dwelling construction' meant that questions of tenancy management 'slipped to the bottom of the policy agenda'. The 'marginalised public housing system' which resulted was considered unproblematic because housing policy was 'structured on the assumption that high rates of economic growth would continue to deliver ever higher standards of living and housing conditions', rather than upon a more realistic expectation of a boom-bust cycle. Such an account as this treats the social consequences of the building program as attributable to a mix of short-sighted, overly optimistic policy and a professional bias within housing authorities.

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<sup>25</sup> At the beginning of the 1970s, the Department's policy on industrial housing shifted. Industrial enterprises would no longer head-lease government-owned homes; the Department now held the view that 'where private firms require homes to attract workers they should be prepared to contribute towards the cost of achieving this, by purchasing houses over a short term' (Allwinton 1971, p. 14).

My argument is not that Hayward or other scholars are wrong when they put forward this analysis. Rather, I argue that this analysis is produced within one set of discursive relations, but the discursive relations which can be read in the documents of the time are subtly different. The difference relates to the relative discursive positions of the housing authority, economic conditions and the building program. In accounts like that presented by Hayward, there is an assumption that in fact, wider economic conditions determined the limits of the building program, that housing authorities organised themselves accordingly, and that the resulting problems arose from a failure to appropriately appreciate the economic implications of the risk of changing fortunes — by assuming perpetual economic growth, housing authorities operated as if the social aspects of their operation were unimportant. When economic uncertainty ‘shattered’ this assumption (Hayward 1996, p. 22), the housing authorities had to reconfigure themselves around a social mission. But in the archive, at least in relation to the post-war period, a different set of relations can be perceived. Specifically, the limits of the building program are defined in another way. Although the documents contain much discussion of things holding the building program back, they do not include, explicitly or implicitly, a sense that these problems arise from natural economic limits, whether these are optimistically or pessimistically assessed. These limits are instead established by policy and policy is within the control of Governments.

For example, Adams (1947a, pp. 48-49) called for wartime controls over the supply of materials and building permits to be reinstated, arguing that such controls had been accepted during the war due to the ‘realisation that they were essential to attaining victory and peace. ... [I]f the housing situation is to be regarded as a war against sociological [*sic*] disruption then the most rigid controls appear to me to be justified’. During the 1950s, more than one Director of Housing linked the scale of the program directly to Commonwealth policy in relation to funding, claiming that the size of the housing program was being set not by need but by the availability of finance, with ‘insufficient’ Commonwealth funding capping it at below-demand levels (Plummer 1956, p. 4; 1958, p. 3; Duke 1959, pp. 3-5).

That is, the lack of finance, the shortage of materials and the problems with labour supply are seen not as factors that might always apply to a certain extent, or conditions imposed by a wider economic framework, but as *policy* problems capable of specific, and full, resolution. Within the documents can be read the expectation that once the problems created by the war were over, and the Commonwealth recognised its financial obligations, the Tasmanian state housing authority would be able to build enough houses for everyone who was entitled to assistance and the private sector would build enough for everyone else. Although, as discussed in Chapter 3, a needs-based allocation system was introduced for public housing, this was done to prioritise access, not restrict it — underlying it was the assumption that while those less in

need might have to wait for longer, they would still be housed eventually and for the long-term.

## **Subdivision development and construction: building new housing estates**

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### **Building efficiently: the day labour force**

The term ‘day labour’ in this context refers to the practice of government departments directly employing their own tradesmen in order to perform government construction work. In Australia, it was an established and accepted alternative to engaging private sector firms on a contract basis. In 1924, for example, a Victorian Member of Parliament had contacted the Treasurer of Tasmania to enquire as to ‘the respective merits of Public v. Private enterprise or Day v. Contract labor [sic] in your state’ (Treasury 1924b). In response, the Minister for Lands and Works advised that although the Department did not have ‘official’ evidence, its experience was ‘that day labour on the whole gives better results than contract’ — although it remained policy to call for tenders if ‘a large amount is involved’ (1924a).

In his evidence to the joint Parliamentary committee on home building, Adams (1947a, pp. 28-38) provided a detailed explanation (covering 10 pages of a 69 page document) of how the Bank came to employ its own day labour force. The reason itself was simple: the Bank had great difficulty obtaining competitive contractors to meet its construction targets in the south of the state, and therefore took on its own labour to get the houses built. In March 1946 the first day labourers, including apprentices, were employed, and a joinery factory was established in the former Commonwealth shipbuilding yards to provide prefabricated items for use on site.

The length of the explanation arises from Adams’s (1947a) careful account of all the measures taken by the Bank in the lead up to its decision to employ day labour. He explains each incident of a tender being called — the number of homes, the location, the price — and the Bank’s action in response, whether it is to reject, proceed or negotiate over terms (pp. 28-30). He highlights the Bank’s efforts to centralise and sustain the supply of materials and the coordination of labour, and the ways in which it showed appreciation and understanding of the difficulties contractors faced — even when contractors failed to make genuine and whole-hearted efforts to meet their obligations to the Bank (p. 29). He describes the Bank’s attempts to work directly with the Master Builders’ Association to establish a panel of contractors to undertake the work, and supports his assertions of their poor performance with statistics in an appendix (pp. 30-33, app. 3). He emphasises how the Bank made representations on contractors’ behalf to various authorities for the prompt release of service personnel, made

concessions on price, and negotiated with mainland suppliers (pp. 31-32). Finally, he stresses that the Bank's Board was 'difident [*sic*]' about day labour construction and 'reluctant to depart from the system of competitive tendering', but that it finally realised that the program could not 'proceed at a rate commensurate with the demand for homes' unless something changed (p. 28).

In short, it is made clear to the reader that day labour was taken on as a last resort. The Bank obtained legislative reform to clarify that it did indeed have the power to operate a day labour organisation (Adams 1947a, p. 34), and 'made it clear [to Parliament] ... that the day labour scheme would be supplementary to the contracting method and that it was only intended to bridge the gap between the limited output of private contractors and the demands of the home building programme [*sic*]' (p. 35). It would be used only in areas where 'satisfactory' contract arrangements were unavailable (p. 34).

This attitude persisted throughout the rest of the Agricultural Bank's tenure as the state housing authority; in its last annual report, the Board stated that contractors were taking on an increasing proportion of the work, and that in future, 'policy in relation to the extent of day labour operations will be governed by the ability of contractors to tender at a price comparable with day labour costs' (Driscoll, Plummer & Veale 1953b, p. 7). It was an attitude passed onto the new Housing Department; in his first report, the Director of Housing included a long section emphasising the involvement of contractors in all regions of the state, even in the south (Plummer 1954, pp. 5-6). By 1957, the use of day labour was 'confined to Hobart and its suburban areas'; the Director explained that the practice was most effective when the flow of work was large enough 'to warrant the establishment of stores, timber yards, and joinery shop', and consistent, as 'sudden fluctuations either way can materially affect overheads'. Both of these factors applied to the south, and the use of day labour there had 'been of inestimable value' (1957, p. 4).

The discourse discussed above involves at least two distinct objects: one designated 'day labour' or the 'day labour force', and one which can be described as 'private enterprise' or 'contractors'. These two objects were presented as mutually exclusive alternatives, and, as suggested above, the latter was the preferred of the two. That is, it was 'known' that it was correct and appropriate practice to produce public housing through private contractors, and to use day labour employees only in situations where contractors were proven to be unavailable. As the earlier exchange between the Victorian Parliamentarian and the Tasmanian Treasury and the terms of Agricultural Bank's defence of its decision-making around this issue suggest, there were ongoing concerns about the relative costs involved in employing day labour instead of



contractors. This concern placed ‘day labour’, but not contract labour, in a specific relationship with another discursive object, ‘efficiency’.

In 1960, the Parliamentary Labor Party’s housing subcommittee presented the Department with a detailed list of questions about the Department’s performance. The Department was asked to provide detailed figures for each state housing authority with regard to construction costs, rents, terms of purchase contracts, deposit requirements, and rental rebates and to provide an extensive series of comparisons between different approaches to home building; one of these involved the question of whether day labour was cheaper than contract construction (Housing Department 1960a). Collectively, the questions asked suggest a deep concern about whether or not the Department was operating efficiently, and the question of day labour versus contract labour was considered in this light.

But notably, when required to clarify whether day labour really was cheaper than contract, the Department’s response, like that of the Department of Main Roads in 1924, was that it did not know — it had not called for tenders in Hobart ‘for a considerable period’ and therefore had no point of comparison. It provided various figures, with caveats, comparing day labour construction with contract construction in other parts of the state, before concluding that

it appears that costs of building by day labour are not cheaper than those under competitive tendering. However, in the absence of actual contracts for the construction of dwellings as built by day labour in the Hobart Metropolitan area, the actual margin of possible difference in costs cannot be conclusively established.

The Department further argued that southern contractors could not cope with the pace of development in Hobart; that ‘it is still Government policy to employ day labour to build departmental buildings in Hobart’; and that conditions in the south were not as competitive as the north and north-west and it was therefore unlikely that any tender process would generate particularly low prices. Bulk production gave day labour an advantage — the Department observed that the workforce could produce a timber dwelling in Hobart for £2958, but the same dwelling would cost £3173 if built by a contractor for an individual buyer (Housing Department 1960b, pp. 7.1-7.2).

The ‘day labour force’ being discussed here is a discursive object made of individual employees, the number of which varied over time. In 1949, the Agricultural Bank Board reported that there were 453 men employed in varying trades, including 205 carpenters (Adams, Plummer & Veale 1950, p. 14). A year later, in 1950, there were 619 employees (1951, p. 10), and a year after that, 831 (1952, p. 9). In 1956, the Housing Department retrenched 200 workers because of the ‘hand-to-mouth’ financing situation (Plummer 1956, p. 5). Adjustments to the building program in response to a change in the distribution of demand

meant another round of retrenchments ‘became necessary’ in 1966, with the day labour force reduced from 379 tradesmen to 297 (Duke 1966, p. 11).

What is not discernable in the documents is the availability of a day labour subject-position, at least in this level of the discourse. Although the number of individuals is painstakingly recorded, these individuals are present only as aggregate numbers, as trades or as work gangs. For example, the 1960 annual report records that at this time there were 320 day labour employees, which, the Director explains, is the number needed to produce a minimum of five completions per week, with an average construction period per dwelling of 90 days (Duke 1960, p. 12). Within these boundaries, day labourers do not have an individual identity or subjectivity, or, importantly, individual agency. This is partly because their voices do not appear in the archive — although, with one exception (Department of Housing and Construction 1978h), neither do the voices of private contractors, and yet contractors are able to adopt a subjectivity that permits agency. This is evident in the following extracts from Adams’s (1947a, pp. 28-33) extended account of why the Board decided to engage day labour.

... tenders were called for the construction of 20 homes ... the lowest tenderer found that he was unable to proceed and the Board considered that the other tenders were excessive. Negotiations followed ... and finally an arrangement was entered with a large Hobart Contractor [*sic*] to construct 30 dwellings on a “cost plus” basis with a maximum figure of £888 per house. ... Within a few months tenders were called for the construction of additional dwellings at Glenorchy. Although a satisfactory tender was received from one contractor, £820 per house, he was unable to proceed because of financial difficulties. ... subsequently a contractor agreed to proceed at a basic price of £921 per house. ... prices submitted by contractors showed considerable variations. This was probably due ... to the varying degrees of efficiency of individual contractors but even the lowest tenders showed an alarming tendency to increase to an extent not justified by the increase in the cost of materials and labour. ... the Board considered a proposal from a large and reputable firm of Mainland Contractors... Negotiations were also conducted with another Mainland [*sic*] firm .... This organisation ... advised the Board that because of the difficulties in obtaining an assured supply of labour it could not undertake the construction of dwellings for the Bank.

In contrast, however, Adams (1947a, pp. 35-36) presents day labour employees not as a varied group of individuals with differing characteristics, but as a ‘scheme’ or a ‘system’:

... it was intended that the day labour scheme would be supplementary to the contracting method .... The Board immediately set up an organisation to purchase materials and engage labour. ... This system of construction has been extended to other parts of Hobart, Burnie and Railton... The success of the day labour method of construction, particularly as to speed, is due in a large measure to the fact that the Board was able to enter into an arrangement with the Commonwealth Government for the release of the Shipbuilding Yards at Prince of Wales Bay... The Bank took possession ... and proceeded immediately with the adaptation of the plant for pre-cutting and assembling of house sections. As other sections of the Yard became available, activities were extended to

include plumbing assembly, fabrication of pre-cast concrete slabs and manufacture of plaster sheets. ... It is peculiar that the building industry, which lends itself so readily to the use of power-operated machinery, has made the least progress in the adoption of mechanical methods, or the assembly line system. The use of the hand saw still remains for most contractors the only method of cutting wood into the required shapes and sizes for home building. At the Ship Yard factory, timber is cut by power-operated saws, wall sections are fabricated and weatherboarded on specially constructed tables....

There are two interesting aspects to this latter description. The first is the connection made between the Bank's use of day labour and the Bank's operation of a factory complex. The day labour force is, by association, part of a mechanised system of mass production that is not available to contractors. The second is the different discursive perspective that is evident. The Parliamentary Labor Party's concern that day labour was not efficient in comparison to (presumably more efficient) alternatives is the expression of one perspective, one that treats efficiency as a question of cost, and from this perspective, day labour occupies an unfavourable position in relation to contract labour. Adams's account above is the expression of another — that the use of day labour allows access to a different kind of efficiency, one based on method, order and technology. It is these different discursive perspectives — these discursive alternatives — that explain the nature of the knowledge that was produced out of these relations, and the nature of the practice which reproduced that knowledge.

That is, the Bank, and later the Department, 'knew' that day labour was an efficient and effective mode of practice, that it worked well in particular contexts or on particular types of projects, and that it was worth retaining for those reasons. This knowledge was produced out of a discursive relationship between 'day labour' and 'efficiency' in which day labour provided a mechanism by which a particular kind of efficiency could be accessed and employed. The implication of this, of course, is that 'efficiency' exists in different modes and therefore, different mechanisms would be needed to access it in its other forms. However, outsiders, like the Parliamentary Labour Party or the Joint Committee members to whom Adams directed his remarks, 'knew' contract labour was probably — although not certainly — more efficient than day labour because it cost less. This knowledge was produced out of a discursive relationship in which 'efficiency' existed as a single and straightforward process of translation of inputs into outputs. Their focus was upon which of the two separately defined sides of the day labour/contract alternative offered the cheapest way to achieve this translation.

Because the Department's knowledge rested upon a heterogeneous and qualitative conceptualisation of 'efficiency', it was not essential to involve day labour — when necessary, the Department was capable of retrenching large numbers of employees or making use of other forms of labour — and nor was it essential to know with absolute certainty which option cost the least. Because outsiders' knowledge rested upon a homogeneous and instrumental conceptualisation of 'efficiency', it was crucial to know which form of labour was cheapest

because it was unthinkable to use a more expensive form of labour if a cheaper one was available. The existence of these two discursive alternatives meant that day labour continued to be used to produce public housing, but that the Department, in using it, ‘knew’ that its use of it was in some way problematic or illegitimate. This ambivalence was to persist and re-emerge in later decision-making, not just in relation to the day labour force but with regard to the broadacre construction program as a whole.

### **The practice of broadacre housing production**

In 1956, the Director responded to ‘criticism’ of the Department’s decision to build in unsettled areas. These criticisms, he said,

are generally based on the cost involved in extending services to such areas. It is apparently not understood by the critics that very little land remains in existing town areas which is suitable for development on the scale necessary for the programme [*sic*] of home building required by the demand for new dwellings. Even where such land exists its high cost presents a bar to economic development for a purpose which, of necessity, is governed by considerations of cost. Generally it is the Department’s policy to purchase large areas which are suitable for the development of neighbourhood type projects the completion of which is spread over a period of years. ... While the work of the Department in this respect has involved the extension of services such extensions are not necessarily for the sole benefit of the Department’s subdivisions, but the initial provision of services has induced private sub-dividers to develop land on a smaller scale in the vicinity of the larger projects. As a consequence, many private home sites have become available.... In fact, it can be said without hesitation that the development of land, for example on the Eastern shores of the Derwent, has given considerable impetus to the schemes for the provision of sewerage and water supply services in that area (Plummer 1956, p. 6).

This extract points to a number of aspects of the discursive practice of house building and also to the knowledge that such practice generated. It was a practice centred around building at a particular ‘scale’; a practice driven by the need to contain costs; a practice oriented towards the ‘development of neighbourhood[s]’ — and, by pursuing such development, the Department knew (‘without hesitation’) that it was encouraging private sector development in new areas and ensuring that existing communities were provided with sewerage and water services that they would otherwise not have had.

It was also a practice concerned with a series of technical processes to do with infrastructure, funding arrangements and construction techniques. These technical processes form the ‘surface’ from which the ‘building program’ emerges as an object of discourse (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 45-46). The interplay between the technical processes of subdivision development and the ‘building program’ as a discursive object can be seen in the Department’s experiences of the late 1950s and 1960s, which it presented in annual reports as a series of procedural,

technological and logistical challenges (see, for example, Plummer 1958, p. 7; Duke 1963, pp. 11-12; 1964, p. 13; 1966, p. 13; Mayhead 1967, p. 11; Allwinton 1968, p. 6).

The Department's experience of negotiating the technicalities of subdivision development and construction reinforced its subject-status of 'expert', not just in the work of construction, but specifically in the construction of public housing. Therefore, in 1960 when the Parliamentary Labor Party subcommittee asked the Department to provide evidence 'in support of the attitude that it is cheaper to build in large outer area subdivisions than to purchase relatively small areas in built-up areas and to build on them', the Department's response explained that purchasing and developing land allowed it to cut out the profit margin that would otherwise accrue if a developer undertook the subdivision. This margin could be substantial: according to the response, the Department could develop land in Chigwell for £425, but the government valuation of those blocks was up to £750. The difference was a significant saving as 'every additional £100 of cost increases rental by approximately 3/6 per week' (Housing Department 1960b, pp. 15.11-15.12). Nonetheless, concerns about the wisdom of concentrating upon broadacre development — that is, of producing the building program in a particular format — persisted.

### **Defending broadacre housing production**

These tensions emerged particularly prominently in the 1969 dispute between the new Liberal Government and the Department over the location of the Department's construction activities. The changes to allocations policy sought by the new Government are covered in Chapter 3; here, the focus is the contemporaneous attempt to change the direction of the Department's broadacre policy. On 15 July, the Minister informed the Director of Housing that Cabinet had decided that after the Department finished the estate it was then building at Mornington, rather than move on to its broadacre holdings at Rokeby as planned, it was to relocate back to sites in Glenorchy (Housing Department 1969o). Possibly in response to resistance from the Director (see 1969ab, 1969j, 1969k), Cabinet also ordered that a 'Special Housing Advisory Committee' be established to examine the question further (1969o).

This dispute points to the emergence of another object of discourse, positioned in relation to the 'building program'. This was the 'housing development', an object also referred to as the 'large scale development' and the 'broadacre development' (I use the term 'broadacre' to refer to it). This was not a new discursive object, as the Labor Party subcommittee's question in 1960 indicates, but the conflict between the Government and the Department over Rokeby can be read as a contest over the definition of this object and the right of subjects to define it. Associated with this process of definition was the emergence of particular estates as objects of discourse in their own right: Risdon Vale, Rokeby and Bridgewater are named in the file

pertaining to this dispute, but others would emerge in future years: Clarendon Vale and Gagebrook, for example. These estates, as objects of discourse, were constituted in a different way to those constructed in earlier years, like Chigwell, Goodwood and Abbotsfield.

The potentially problematic nature of the broadacre was apparent in the rationale which the Government presented for its Special Housing Advisory Committee. According to newspaper clippings included in the file, the Committee was to ‘help the Government plan future housing development’ and also ‘generally look into the social and economic aspects of housing’ (Housing Department 1969l). It ‘would consider industrial development and employment patterns, traffic requirements and problems and cost of travelling, higher density development, availability of services, social problems and prejudices, economic and geographic considerations’, including the preference of two thirds of applicants for the Western Shore, and ‘the high cost of services and traffic problems [caused] by large scale developments in undeveloped areas’ (1969aa). At the first committee meeting, the Minister told the Committee the Government was worried about ‘the trend of housing activities in the Hobart area, particularly as they related to the cost to the Government as a whole, to tenants, and the question of employment’ (1969m).

The discussions between the Minister and the Director of Housing in the lead-up to this seem to have been principally concerned with costs — of moving or fragmenting the day labour force, of land and of development and construction — and to the availability of land and services (Housing Department 1969q). These fitted with a conceptualisation of the broadacre derived from the technical dimensions of the building program. But the Government had also raised the possibility of a more radical shift in policy, one with a direct bearing on the broadacre as a discursive object in its own right. Prior to the establishment of the Special Housing Advisory Committee, WHN Calver, the Chief Planning Officer of the Southern Metropolitan Master Planning Authority (SMMPA),<sup>26</sup> had been asked to provide a report to Cabinet ‘on the situation from a planning point of view’ (1969k). His paper argued ‘that it is better to locate housing department homes in relatively small groups, adjacent to existing developed areas and that some dispersal throughout the Metropolitan area seems desirable’ (1969r).

Calver’s recommendation was based upon the claim that mixed communities and dispersed public housing had social advantages. He criticised the homogeneity of public housing estates, made up as they were of young, first home buyers, pointing to the resulting short-lived

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<sup>26</sup> The Southern Metropolitan Master Planning Authority was the predecessor body to the similarly-named Southern Metropolitan Planning Authority.

demand for school facilities, which meant that ‘quite often the accommodation will be underutilised long before the loan on the school has been paid off’. It was also, he argued, desirable that feelings of inferiority based on place of residence be reduced. A well mixed society brings together a wide variety of people of different talents and well balanced people with qualities of leadership emerge. The community is better balanced too and less liable to excess in any direction. If juvenile delinquency is more prevalent in Housing Department estates it is probably due to the estates being so large, being socially unbalanced and feelings of being made inferior (Housing Department 1969r).

The tenor of Calver’s remarks is consistent with comments included in notes from a meeting between representatives of the Housing and Education Departments in October 1969. The relevant section of these notes reads:

Large Housing Department developments cause social problems which can only be alleviated by a leavening of private housing. Bearing this in mind a scattering of small housing department estates is preferred but large scale Housing Department schemes could be located ... where there are already large private housing estates.

Specifically in relation to the Department’s estate of Risdon Vale, the notes also record that the Education Department would ‘[p]refer no Housing Department expansion in this area because of sociological problems’ (Housing Department 1969s). And a very early outline of the Special Housing Advisory Committee’s final report includes an extract from a communication from the Director-General of Education to the Director of Housing referring to the ‘problem’ his Department experienced in relation to the ‘quality or nature of children in large compact housing area such as Risdon Vale’ (Housing Department 1969t).

All of this marks a modification to the existing object of the broadacre, one which begins to problematise and pathologise estates, in general and, by singling out certain estates as especially problematic, in particular. This modification introduces into a discourse previously focussed on technocratic practice and the production of houses a focus on social outcomes, and, into a discourse which concentrated on the technical defects of housing estates (homogeneity, lack of services), a focus on social defects (isolation, behaviour).

But a counter discourse still existed. Neil Abercrombie, the Town and Country Planning Commissioner, had a less negative view of Risdon Vale. He saw it as a form of ‘new town’ along the lines of South Australia’s Elizabeth or developments in the Victorian Latrobe Valley, and pointed out that using broadacre land for its cost advantages was ‘not unsound bearing in mind the main objective of public housing’. A policy to provide ‘reasonable housing plus suitable services and amenities at reasonable cost’ would inevitably conflict with a policy of minimising costs to government (Housing Department 1969u). This point was taken up by others (1969v, 1969n) and was included in the Committee’s final report (1969p).

My reading of the minutes and other papers from the Committee's meetings is that its ultimate recommendation, which was to 'split' the workforce and the building program between Glenorchy and Rokeby, was the Director's compromise (Housing Department 1969i), a necessary one given another, less prominent factor in the Committee's deliberations. At the meeting on 22 October, the Director of Housing is recorded as having stated that 'irrespective of the discussions which had taken place, the Government had indicated that the Department's Day Labour force was to be retained and *on this basis some 300 cottages will be constructed per annum*' (1969w, my emphasis). That is, the day labour force was set up to carry out a particular type of development, shifting its focus to a different type of development would take time, and the choice of future locations was therefore confined to broadacre sites in Brighton, Kingborough, Clarence and possibly Granton. At the time, the Department already owned enough land to provide 3500 lots at Rokeby, but only 540 'steep and rocky' lots at Glenorchy (1969k). Thus the object of the broadacre was closely tied to the practice of the broadacre in housing discourse. The need to keep the day labour force operating meant that the work continued to happen while the Committee talked (1969i, 1969x).

## **Building better broadacres**

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### **Strategies to improve the broadacre**

The appointment of the Special Housing Advisory Committee may have been because the Department's decision-making about estate location and planning had come under question. The Director's 1969 annual report to Parliament, presented in September, when the Advisory Committee was preparing its report for the Minister, provided a detailed account of the processes the Department followed when planning subdivisions. The Director maintained that the Department held 'numerous conferences' with other agencies to inform them about its intentions and allow them to coordinate their activity with the Department's. It set aside areas for hotels, service stations, community centres, shopping facilities and churches in its estates in order to 'make provision for facilities in future subdivisions which may be lacking in many areas where development has been completed' (Allwinton 1969, p. 5). It had plans to do even more in future. Although there were already shops in a number of subdivisions which were giving 'satisfactory service', the Department would work towards 'a synthesis of private enterprise activity and construction of shops by the Department'. It would either lease out or sell these premises, basing the decision upon 'specialised research' which would 'ensure rational decisions relating to the size, location, timing and nature of future commercial activity' (p. 17).



Throughout the 1970s, at least according to my reading of the archive, there is a consistent emphasis on the Department's efforts to make broadacres 'better'. I interpret this as a continuation of the discursive contestation over the definition and delineation of broadacres as an object of discourse. Within this context, the object of the 'broadacre' was being treated by the Department as something which was potentially problematic, but amenable to 'rational' remediation.

One such remedial strategy involved selling some of the lots developed by the Department to private home builders. The intent was to 'break up' estates through 'intrusions of diverse architecture and sociology', as well as to maintain downward pressure on overall land prices (Allwinton 1971, p. 7). A lot of hope was invested in the sales program but it got off to a slow start. In his 1970, 1971 and 1972 annual reports, the Director of Housing expressed 'disappointment' at the low demand for this land. The lack of interest was perplexing, given that '[m]ost of it is excellent, well-located building land', especially in the context of 'general complaints about the exorbitant [*sic*] prices being asked for residential land' (1970, p. 6). Following some amendments to the scheme (see Housing Department 1972a), things improved, and in 1973 the Director reported 165 sales, including in areas like Mornington and Rokeby which were 'closely associated with our standard construction', and indicated that in some places, supply of the lots 'actually became scarce' (Allwinton 1973, pp. 4, 6). The policy also had wider support; in 1974, the Tasmanian Valuer-General suggested it should be expanded to include the sale of 'sizeable tracts' of land to the private sector in order to encourage variety, originality and competition in the delivery of housing and subdivisions (Doyle 1974, p. 3).

But there are some interesting contradictions apparent in the program. It might have been designed to introduce 'variety', but the land was 'carefully selected so that it is not centrally situated among large areas of standard housing', and construction on adjacent lots was confined to people purchasing homes through the Low Deposit Purchase Scheme, which targeted a slightly wealthier group than did the standard purchase contracts (Allwinton 1972, p. 5).

A further remediation strategy involved changes to subdivision layout. The Radburn<sup>27</sup> system is now synonymous with public housing failure in other Australian states, especially in New South

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<sup>27</sup> 'Radburn' design originated in the US and has been described as distilling 'many of the basic principles of planning theory from the thirties to the sixties... decentralized [*sic*], self-contained settlements, organized to promote environmental considerations by conserving open space, harnessing the automobile, and promoting community life', inspired by the British 'garden city' but 'tailored ... to the distinct legal and social customs of the United States' (Birch 1980, pp. 424-425). It found its way to Australia in the 1970s, and was enthusiastically adopted by state housing authorities (Freestone 2004, p. 197). The Housing Department's (1974i) own focus is suggested in a brief, unattributed file note handwritten on a single sheet of unlined paper:

Wales. The author of this piece, then a senior officer with the New South Wales Department of Housing, describes how

[a]s a town planning student in the 1970s I was introduced to the garden city concept and the Radburn design principle. ... We earnestly discussed the advantages of these people friendly estates and how good it would be to live in such a well planned paradise. ... Now, as I return to the estates 20 years on, I find expectations have not been met. Streets are deserted, the open space empty wastelands and the communities stressed and fearful (Woodward 1997, p. 25).

However, an important part of the story of Radburn failure is that it is a retrospective one; as with public housing more broadly, a critical constituent of the discursive object of 'Radburn' is a particular understanding of Radburn's past.

In Tasmania, Radburn was first implemented in the 1970s in a section of the Department's new estate of Rokeby. A reasonably contemporaneous account of the Radburn experience, written between 1975 and 1977, attributed the original inspiration to the Clarence Council town planner (Housing Department 1977e; also 1977f). The Council had proposed that, in 'a first for Tasmania', the Rokeby area should be developed 'as a new town to house some 30,000 people' (1969y). The Department had acquired extensive holdings in the Rokeby area since 1961 (686 acres by 1972, with a further 403 acres added over the next few years) and the Radburn portion of its subdivision was developed 'in close consultation with the Council' (1977e). However, the Department's decision to adopt Radburn also arose out of a desire to undertake 'a progressive experiment'. Against a backdrop of growing public and expert criticism of the Department's existing approach to subdivision, the new Director of Housing's sympathies inclined towards 'the mounting "social concern" — communities not housing' and the new Minister for Housing wanted to demonstrate that his Department was 'responsive to new ideas and approaches'. Radburn was being used in other Australian states and therefore offered a convenient way to put these aspirations into practice (1977f).

The Department's planning advisory team thought Radburn had 'potential for providing a more desirable living environment' (Housing Department 1972k). The Department hoped that Rokeby Radburn would become 'a national showpiece' and tried to maximise its success through 'careful' allotments, 'education' of residents to accept the additional responsibilities of living in Radburn, and 'strict' requirements, reinforced by special clauses in rental and purchase contracts, that tenants 'live up to the general standard of gardening and property care in the area', with transfer or eviction the penalty for failure to do so (1972k, 1973l). A special document produced for the new residents outlining what was expected pointed out to each that

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'Radburn. New Jersey U.S.A. Designed by Clarence S. Stein & Henry Wright 1928. "First sincere attempt to segregate pedestrian & vehicular traffic."'

you have been specially selected as an occupant. It must be realised that this type of Subdivision is new to all occupants and a great deal of tolerance and tact will be called for in your relations with your neighbours. Your full co-operation [*sic*] is sought in this important matter (1973m).

The co-option of resident subjects into the Department's discursive struggle over the definition of the broadacre object can also be read as the application of governmental practice to condition and direct tenant behaviour. But this is a practice which seeks both to govern the tenant as a potentially non-compliant subject and to govern the tenant as a potential subject-ally.

### **Other views: the discursive setting for broadacre improvement**

Against the Department's efforts to improve broadacre estates, the papers from a series of seminars sponsored by the Housing Department in the mid-1970s provide useful evidence of some of the other views being articulated about Tasmanian public housing in this period. In general, these views were critical of broadacre development, although in his 1974 paper (see p. 75 above) interstate academic Michael Jones (1974, pp. 13-15) pointed out that criticism of broadacres for their lack of 'social mix' was based on 'inaccurate, selective interpretations of the literature', and that the extra costs of 'mixed' developments were not worth 'the dubious benefits' that would be obtained. But this perspective differs from those of other speakers.

For example, the Glenorchy Council's town planner expressed approval of 'the real effort' the Department was making to introduce 'diversity in housing style and design while operating with the economical [*sic*] restraints which tend to have taken charge of most of our options in development' (Clark 1975, p. 10) — but also argued that in trying to attain a balance between 'economics' and 'standards', some important things had been obscured. These included the cost of transport, social isolation, heating costs and the effect of population 'bulge' on school infrastructure. As the Housing Department provided 'a major input in the urban system', it should be 'leading the way in this field' (pp. 11-12).

Speaking on 'housing standards and housing choice: a private sector view', another speaker identified the lack of choice for tenants as the principal deficiency of broadacre estates. Public housing authorities, he argued, made 'every effort ... to provide the occupants with similar items, whether they are wanted or not', and he criticised the absence of information

written by the people that have always been the prime responsibility of the public sector, namely what is classified as the "blue collar worker" or the lower income family. In the course of our business we discuss housing with hundreds of these people and as you may be well aware they form a very large portion of our business. We do notice an extraordinary [*sic*] factor which of late has increased, namely that there is building up all the time certain psychological resentment at the fact that the public sector have far less choice and far more direction than applies in the private sector (Archer, B 1975, p. 2).

Choice was important, because it was the ‘act of choice’ that integrated people into their community (p. 3).

The Brotherhood of St Laurence, whose discursive influence was noted in Chapter 3, also called for choice. In her seminar paper, Concetta Benn (1975, p. 20), one of the organisation’s senior workers, emphasised the importance of choice for low income earners, not necessarily between tenures or fixtures and fittings, but between locations. Housing authorities would provide this ‘choice’ if they increased the capacity of low income earners to ‘choose’ to live in the inner city by purchasing and rehabilitating older housing and offering it as either public or community association housing.

And finally, in a paper entitled ‘Can suburbs become communities?’, Jamrozik (1974, pp. 4-5) characterised public housing estates as ‘artificial’ suburbs compared to those older suburbs which had ‘grown naturally: a suburb’s size and composition of its population developed over a period of years, and in that time a certain organic character of the suburb developed as well’. The ‘artificial’ suburbs included private ‘dormitory’ developments as well as government estates, which ‘have become famous, or notorious, whichever way one prefers to look at them’. The latter were characterised by inadequate services and facilities, geographical isolation, disadvantaged residents, homogenous populations and ‘a lack of leadership and a lack of common interests’. A community, as opposed to a suburb, was ‘self-reliant’ — it solved its own problems, developed ‘its own independent style of living’, met the needs of all its residents and provided those residents with a sense of belonging and ‘a part to play in the social process of the locality’. Turning suburbs into communities required planning that was specific to the needs of future inhabitants and the provision by welfare services of programs which ‘inject a degree of self-reliance’ (pp. 4-8).

I have used these extracts to illustrate that whether it was to be defined and understood as a number of particular, problematic estates; a focus for improvement and the provision of ‘better’ quality living environments; a product of ‘choice’; a ‘suburb’ rather than a community; or a site for ‘community’ to form under the influence of a different kind of service delivery, the discursive contest over the broadacre was becoming increasingly focussed on the likely occupants of these subdivisions and the problems which living in broadacres might present to them. This facilitated the development of new ways of ‘knowing’ the broadacre housing estate, and by extension, public housing and the role of government in providing it.

### **The broadacre becomes a problem: the failure of planning**

In 1974, a newspaper article referred to comments made ‘a couple of years’ earlier by the then Director of Housing, who had apparently said ‘that Risdon Vale was a mistake’, that ‘the

problems it was creating' were due to its 'isolation and ... homogenous nature', and that 'the lesson had been learned' (Housing Department 1974h). The document in which the Director said these things — if he said them in writing — was not in the files I examined. But there are suggestive references in other documents. At the Department's second seminar, one speaker, a local architect, mentioned that at the first, the Director of Housing had 'said quite a lot and got into hot water to boot' (Shugg 1973, p. 1). He then presented a lengthy extract (though not necessarily, from the context, the controversial section) from the Director's paper:

Because we have been almost totally absorbed in the pursuit of roofs to put over peoples [sic] heads, the provision of a better community environment has taken second place — I can see government housing authorities (and the Housing Department in particular) assuming a far more active role in establishing this environment. We won't leave it to chance to improve commercial and community facilities in subdivisions. We won't expect local government or voluntary agencies to shoulder the whole burden of providing recreational and cultural facilities. There will be greater co-ordination and *co-operation* between the various government departments and agencies providing such facilities as transport, health services, education etc. We won't leave it to chance for private enterprise industrial entrepreneurs to establish industries in reasonable proximity to future Housing Department subdivisions. *This will be done as an elementary matter of planning right from the start*' (Allwinton, cited in Shugg 1973, p. 2, emphasis in original).

This extract is consistent with other comments directly attributable to that Director, such as those in annual reports, including the one cited on p. 136 above (i.e. Allwinton 1969, p. 17; also 1972, p. 4; 1973, p. 3; 1974, p. 4).

In the late 1970s, the consultants commissioned to produce the planning strategy for the Department's new estate at Gagebrook explicitly identified 'inherent differences' between the development of public housing estates versus private housing estates, arising from the fact that most residents of the former would be on low incomes (Gutteridge Haskins & Davey Pty Ltd 1977, p. 14). The consultants noted that the Department was 'aware of the social implications of concentrating such a uniform section of community into one sector of the metropolitan area', and was seeking to use sales of private lots to reduce 'social problems' in the area. Up to 40% of the developed land would be sold on the open market, and 'selected areas' might also be opened up for the use of private developers (p. 31).

The private lot sales scheme can therefore be read not just as a broadacre improvement strategy, but also as an attempt to reclaim the discursive territory of the broadacre and as a sign that this territory was being colonised by an alternative version of the broadacre, one that was problematic and pathological. The Department's private lot sales scheme operated in the way that it did, and was promoted in the way that it was, because it was implicitly accepted that the broadacre was inadequate on its own — and not just inadequate, but likely to produce problems for its residents. Its inadequacy extended both to the 'sociology' of the occupants

and to the built environment; since the latter was the creation of the Department, then the boundaries of the broadacre problem incorporated the Department's construction program.

In 1980, a researcher for the SMPA had identified the Housing Department as, by 'default', 'the largest land use planner and social planner' in the southern region. He also commented on the considerable barriers which the Department faced due to the lack of 'a comprehensive regional planning framework' to support it and the immensely 'fragile' position of its tenants (Tickner 1980a, p. 5). A 1978 consultants' report on land development in Tasmania similarly suggested that the Department's position of de facto market leader was not 'taken up by choice, it was just the outcome of policies they [the Department] had adopted in other fields', and claimed that the Department was 'concerned over the situation' because there was no strategic plan 'guiding' its decision-making (Lyneham et al. 1978, p. 16).

But attempts at integrated, strategic, 'proper' planning for Tasmania as a whole had proved abortive; 'planning' was problematic not just in relation to housing but in relation to other areas of state activity. The same consultants outlined how, in 1974, legislation which would have provided a 'framework' for strategic planning had failed to get past the committee stage in the Legislative Council. A state growth strategy report produced two years later remained in draft form. At a regional level, the master planning authority in the south (the SMMPA) was 'disbanded' before it could publish its development strategy, and this meant that when it was released, the report (Southern Metropolitan Master Planning Authority 1976) 'had not constituency, so its recommendations were discarded'. A new Department of Planning and Development was established in 1977, but its responsibilities did not include regional planning (Lyneham et al. 1978, pp. 11-12).<sup>28</sup>

All of these references point to the dimensions of 'planning' as it existed as an object of discourse. 'Planning' meant something that could only be done correctly if there was a strategic framework in place and all parties were acting in a coordinated way. The strategic framework and the mode of coordination were unqualified entities in this definition, by which I mean that although their existence was required, their content was undefined. Presumably poor social outcomes were legitimate provided they were produced by design, not by accident (see Winter 2009).

Because the practice of 'planning' in Tasmania was marked out, discursively, as proceeding incorrectly, the Department's role as the largest player in the system and the estates which it

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<sup>28</sup> The Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office catalogue description for this agency says it was established to 'encourage the establishment and development of industry and the promotion of Tasmanian exports, and to provide a focal point for liaison between private industry and government'.

produced were also rendered problematic. There are signs in the files that the Department did try to practise 'planning' in the correct way. In relation to its new estate of Gagebrook, for example, the Department produced a preliminary planning report 'with the aim of stimulating interest and promoting an exchange of ideas' on the development of what was to be 'a major new residential area for Hobart'. The report emphasised the importance to the new development of 'a high level of co-ordination and integration of activities ... supported by all bodies' (Housing Department 1976h, p. 1). However, although some officers wanted to make this document generally available the Director of Housing was more cautious, saying that he '[had] a fear that someone will put emphasis on some point and forever after point the bone<sup>29</sup> at us' (1976g).

But the archive also suggests that the object of 'planning' in housing discourse differed from the object of 'planning' in planning discourse, although the existence of the latter certainly conditioned and constituted the former. In 1978, Treasury had brought a submission to Cabinet calling for the Housing Department's broadacre policy to be reviewed. The submission acknowledged that broadacre development was government policy, but stated that 'the resultant unnecessary high costs associated with providing basic infrastructure may not be fully appreciated', citing 'the substantial costs of providing services such as public transport, roads, water, sewerage, schools, police stations and welfare'. Infill development would 'provide a generally more acceptable distribution of low-income families in the community' and make more efficient use of services (Department of Housing and Construction 1978b). On Treasury's recommendation, an interdepartmental committee was established to 'review the current policy' (1978a). But despite the original submission's focus on the specific costs of broadacre development, the committee's progress report indicated that the 'major issue' was 'seen' as 'the need for Co-ordination of Development [*sic*]'. The 'legislative vacuum' at the state level produced 'unilateral and unco-ordinated [*sic*] action often leading to uneconomic development and the necessary or inadequate provision of facilities and services'. The outcome of the interdepartmental discussions was therefore to be a standing committee to ensure 'continuous relationships concerning Government house planning and development'. Permanent membership would be confined to the Education and Housing Departments, with other authorities only involved 'as considered necessary from time to time' (Cabinet Office 1979).

What this episode indicates is that 'planning' as an object of housing discourse was determined not just by the technical body of knowledge contained within planning discourse but also by the non-discursive political reality in which the Department operated. This was a reality in which

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<sup>29</sup> This is an Australian colloquialism meaning to wish bad luck upon someone or indicate them as guilty in some way.

other government agencies were not wholeheartedly supportive of its actions and sought to use their own influence to modify them. It was a reality which the Department had to govern — hence the formation of standing committees and ‘continuous relationships’, the production of ‘preliminary planning reports’ and the rhetoric of ‘high level coordination’. It is also a reality that explains why the Director of Housing feared that someone would ‘point the bone at us’.

## **The state retreats: the broadacre out of favour**

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### **The razor gang: government expenditure cuts**

As suggested in Chapter 4 (see p. 110 above), from the late 1970s the archive suggests an increasing congruence between the Department’s practice in relation to budgeting and the normative practice of the central agencies such as Treasury. Internally, the Department became focussed upon budget management and monitoring, and its construction program became subsumed into and dictated to by this focus. That is, while an earlier Director of Housing had been critical of the containment placed upon the housing program by financial limits, those in senior positions in the Department in this era saw these limits as reasonable, if challenging.

By 1981, the Director informed Parliament, the Housing Department could no longer afford to both ‘allocate a reasonable amount of work to contractors in the Northern and North-western regions’ and maintain its day labour construction program at current levels in the south. Therefore, it would be reducing the size of the day labour force through non-replacement, and adapting it to different kinds of work, such as medium density construction and public works projects. At the same time, the building industry was ‘currently in a state of depression in Tasmania’, and while the Department was trying to prevent unemployment and preserve industry stability by ‘making every effort to provide work [to contractors] ... within the limits governed by the availability of funds and constant attention to the equitable distribution of work between the State’s three regions’, reduced capital funding from the Commonwealth was increasingly making this difficult (Sproule 1981, pp. 12-13).

In February 1981, in response to a growing problem with the State Budget, the Tasmanian Cabinet had established a committee to produce recommendations on ‘the scope for urgent and substantial financial savings’. This committee went by various official names but was known, in an overt nod to a parallel body at the Commonwealth level, as the ‘razor gang’ (Cabinet Office 1981e, 1981d). The reference to the Commonwealth implies that the razor gang was drawing upon on a wider discursive practice directed at finding ‘efficiencies’ and



reducing the size of government (see Australia, House of Representatives 1981, pp. 1830-1853).

The razor gang established three subcommittees, on welfare, development and infrastructure, and based its recommendations on responses received from various agencies in answer to specific questions. Its recommendations were set out in a series of appraisal sheets, and circulated to Cabinet as a single, bulky submission; Ministers were told they had the option to accept, reject or 'in some cases' refine the recommendations (Cabinet Office 1981f).

According to an unsent memo from the Secretary to Cabinet to the Under-Treasurer, the intent of the process, given that it followed closely on the heels of other fiscal and administrative reviews, was to 're-examine those areas already dealt with to see if further savings can be made, and investigate other areas not already examined'. The reason for this was that the State's 'present financial position' was difficult and it was likely that federal funding would reduce even further in the next year (1981c).

Two of the razor gang's appraisals related to the Housing Department. The first contained five measures: to increase rents as per an earlier Cabinet submission, to revise the rebate scheme based on an earlier Cabinet submission but with some additional adjustments, to substitute contract building for day labour building, to have the Department carry its own insurance rather than insuring through the Government insurer, and to prioritise an early Public Service Board review of staffing (Cabinet Office 1981b). The second contained two: to review the Department's 'current policy of broadacre housing development ... with a view to increasing concentration on urban/inner city housing development', and to accelerate the disposal of surplus land held by the Department, 'some of which has been held for many years'. The rationale presented for this second set of measures was to 'reduce the impact of Housing Division operations on Consolidated Revenue' and, in the case of the broadacre recommendation, to reduce the effect that Housing Department policy decisions had on the budgets of other departments, particularly the Education Department (1981a). Cabinet's formal decision to 'cease broadacre housing development and sell vacant land' is recorded, among many others, in the minutes of a dedicated two-day Cabinet meeting held on 23 and 24 June 1981 (1981i).

In its press release on the 'razor gang' cuts, the State Government advertised the measures as necessary at a time of great financial difficulty to 'ensure that the Tasmanian economy was properly managed and better able to confront the difficult times ahead' (Cabinet Office 1981g). However, Budget problems persisted. In June 1982, under a new Government, a vacancy freeze across the public service, applying to all agencies 'whose activities impact *in any way on the State Budget*', was extended 'until further notice' in response to 'financial difficulties'

(Department of Housing and Construction 1982d, emphasis in original), and Cabinet issued a direction that ‘no new programs or initiatives are to be undertaken ... without prior Cabinet approval’ (1982b). The razor gang process and its successors underlines the inscription of the Housing Department’s own financial problems upon a wider grid of specification (Foucault 2002 [1972], pp. 45-47, 55-59) — that of the State Budget. The broadacre estate, and the assorted practices and procedures which produced and sustained it, were drawn into this process of inscription and were redefined and reinterpreted according to their financial implications.

### **The decline of the day labour force**

As part of this problematisation of the Department’s financial and strategic performance, increasing attention was given to the question of the day labour force. There is evidence in the archive to suggest that the discursive practice of employing day labour directly shaped the Department’s performance in other areas, such as the delivery of appropriate types and dispersals of housing. For example, the Gagebrook file contains a file note written by the Director of Housing, dated 11 July 1978. The topic was a complaint from the Education Department that construction was outpacing the school program and the Director-General’s resultant ‘[feeling that] our activities at Gagebrook should not continue’. The memo describes various investigations by the Director to see if a 12 month hiatus in the program would alleviate the pressure. But the document also reveals the principal obstacle to reorganising the work program so dramatically, at least from the Department’s point of view. As the Director comments:

Day Labour is the major factor in our annual programming. We must start with a programme [sic] to keep our total force in full employment for the whole year. There must be a rolling programme covering all trades. This is not an easy task compared to other housing authorities which simply turn on or off the taps that regulate contracts (Department of Housing and Construction 1978e).

Thus the real problem with suspending operations at Gagebrook was the problem of how to redeploy the day labour force — the same problem that had complicated the decision-making of the Special Housing Advisory Committee ten years earlier (see p. 136 above).

The Department tried to reduce the size of the workforce, examining the option of early retirements (Department of Housing and Construction 1978g), and revising its approach to apprentice training (Lockhart 1978, p. 35). Tellingly, the minutes from a planning and budget committee meeting in November 1977 record problems with the Department’s capacity to track day labour performance against the budget, noting: ‘pressure is now necessary; there has been no direction or motivation for the last 5 years’ (Department of Housing and Construction 1977b). Inclusion of this comment suggests that things were starting to change. In 1979, the Director’s annual report announced that ‘[t]he stage has been reached where the size of the

Division's industrial workforce must be contained to a level consistent with the availability of funds and the proportion of work required in the southern part of the State' (Lockhart 1979, p. 31).

In April 1981, a new Director of Housing commissioned an internal team, headed by Robert Annells, the Department's Property Officer, to put together a strategy allowing the Department to withdraw from building work at Gagebrook and re-orient itself towards infill development. The terms of reference required the project team to assess the 'practical effects' of the likely program on the day labour force (Annells et al. 1981, p. iii) — elsewhere, a memo from the Director indicates that the construction rate at Gagebrook was effectively set by the number of day labour workers who were assigned there (Department of Housing and Construction 1978f). The report built its modelling on the assumption that construction levels must match the funding that was available, and that within this envelope, a uniform waiting period should be achieved across the state by June 1986 (Annells et al. 1981, att. 1). The program generated by the modelling involved annual expenditures in the south of just \$4 million in the first year, and no more than \$9.9 million in any year (p. 25), but the current day labour force, the team calculated, required \$12 million to keep it fully employed (att. 1).

A few months earlier, in February and March 1981, a consultant, John Engel, had been contracted by the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Day Labour Policy to undertake a review of the day labour forces of the Education Department and of both divisions of the Department of Housing and Construction. Engel (Office of the Minister for Industrial Relations and Manpower Planning 1981b, pp. 70-71) found that day labour was 'ineffective in cost terms' and that the Housing day labour force was 'a "fixed cost" drain on available funds and distorts expenditure and "value for money"'. He also unpicked the mixed feelings within the Department about its use of day labour. Although the day labour force was seen as offering a customised approach based on knowledge and quality, it was considered to be bureaucratically cumbersome and costly. In contrast, the consensus position on contract labour was that it was cheaper, could be engaged or dropped depending on 'surges in workload and funding' and was bound by contract to deliver a certain standard of performance, but was a variable commodity in accordance with the vagaries of the market, and could be difficult to manage and monitor on 'messy' jobs (p. 8).

In a circular to all day labour employees in October 1981, the Director of Housing assured them that although the workforce did have to reduce to the point where there was no longer a surplus, there would be no retrenchments; reduction would be accomplished by 'natural wastage' with the surplus redeployed to other projects when necessary. The aim, he said, was to reach a point where the day labour force 'will not need non-housing work to keep it

occupied’ and where the Housing Department could offer ‘a satisfying career for tradesmen in an area of important social need’ (Department of Housing and Construction 1981k).

However, in a discussion paper produced for the Cabinet subcommittee, the Housing Department claimed that ‘natural wastage’ was simply ‘not enough’, and reminded Cabinet that although its policy was ‘that day labour will not be permitted to dictate Government policy’ it would in fact do so ‘until either funds are increased or the workforce is reduced’ (Office of the Minister for Industrial Relations and Manpower Planning 1981a).

Politically, the Department recognised that ‘the current employment situation’ and the poor economy would make retrenchments difficult. But it presented its arguments as logically arising from the existing position: the need to reduce building in the south in order ‘to obtain an equitable statewide “waiting period” for government homes’; the need for extra funding to achieve any redeployment; the need to retreat from broadacre development because ‘it places stress on government funding, and compounds social disadvantage... [and] capital intensive infrastructure services are required’ and in order to offer alternative housing to applicants; and the fact that the federal government had recently indicated that it was going to make capital funding allocations conditional upon the competitive tendering of work (Cabinet Office 1981h). Various pressures were applied to persuade Cabinet — that work would have to be diverted to the south ‘at the expense of applicants in the North and North-West Regions’; that 60% of work which was described as ‘day labour’ was actually already performed by the private sector via open tender in the form of the supply of goods and services; and that the ‘day labour’ work that was performed by the day labour force itself was 15% more costly than it would be if it were performed by the private sector, principally because the workers were employed under public service wage rates and conditions (Cabinet Office 1981h; Department of Housing and Construction 1982m; Lockhart 1978, p. 21).

By early 1983 the day labour surplus was reduced to zero and what the Department referred to as ‘base level’ employment in the day labour force was attained. The Director of Housing announced a ‘review [of] the way in which day labour and support services are organised, to ensure that they are ... efficient and cost effective’ (Housing Department 1984a; see also Department of Housing and Construction 1983a). Further reductions were sought — in a memo, the Director observed that ‘some authorities at least’ were ‘continuing’ to utilise a day labour pool established in 1981 to absorb some of the then surplus, and commented that

[j]ust because we have reached a satisfactory level of employees does not mean that the Government as a whole should not rationalise its day labour members. I therefore still consider it appropriate that if departments wish to recruit labour, they should be required to absorb surplus labour from other departments. Since Government policy with Housing Division day labour is to ultimately undertake all works by contract, it can still be argued that the Housing Division has a surplus within its workforce (Department of Housing and Construction 1983b; see also 1982c).

If the Department could 'accelerate' its phase out of day labour, it would also gain 'more latitude for flexible housing policies which do not involve the construction of dwellings' (1983b). This draws this aspect of the Department's practice into explicit relation with the practice of 'innovation', discussed further below (see p. 153 below).

### **The alternative to broadacres: infill development**

In his 1981 annual report to Parliament, the Director of Housing announced that the Department was to reduce its construction activities in outer-suburban areas 'to approximately half the annual program'. The most affected site would be Gagebrook. He explained that the current rate of building in these 'outer-urban' areas was no longer justifiable given the nature of current demand and the 'heavy costs to the whole community, particularly in the provision of services'. The decision did not mean that broadacre development would 'cease', however: there was still demand for detached, three bedroom homes, there were practical and financial limits to an infill program, the 'future growth of the outer-suburban areas must be sufficient to support existing services and new services considered essential... [and] the heavy costs incurred by municipal councils, particularly in the provision of water and sewerage headworks, should be supported by an adequate rate of housing development' (Sproule 1981, pp. 16-17). But just one year later, the policy outlined in the 1981 report had been further refined. Broadacre development was now 'expected to halt in the South in 1982-83', and would be phased out in other regions once the remaining developments there were 'considered to be developed to a viable state'. The Director acknowledged that land supply constraints might make it 'necessary' in future to once again build in the outer suburbs and that at least some of the 'infill' would take place in older estates originally built by the Department (1982, p. 13). But the land purchase program would now focus on urban areas for medium density construction and suburban sites for small subdivisions (p. 15).

The working paper on the future of Gagebrook produced by Annells and his team noted that the criticisms that were being applied to Bridgewater and Gagebrook had once been directed at Goodwood, Chigwell and Mornington, but these places, 'over a period of time, have established a residential environment which is now sought after'. While the team supported 'choice' for tenants, of location and housing type, it nonetheless concluded that broadacres were 'not necessarily "bad"'. The 'extreme inconveniences experienced by broad-acre residents in the past' could be avoided by ensuring the population was at the threshold population level that made service delivery viable (Annells et al. 1981, att. 2).

The question of 'thresholds' was an important one in establishing the discursive position of the broadacre. The Department, for example, had intended Clarendon Vale to be a larger development, but this was stymied by the limitations of existing infrastructure (see

Department of Housing and Construction 1978i). A memo in November 1977 noted that although work at Clarendon Vale would need to stop unless ‘an arrangement’ could be reached with Clarence Council to expand the existing sewerage treatment facility, there were ‘reasons’ to ‘give serious consideration’ to expanding Clarendon Vale. These included that the existing size of the subdivision was as yet ‘not sufficient to support a neighbourhood centre’; additional development, however, ‘would make it [a centre] a viable proposition, and would also eliminate the isolation feeling that is apparent in the existing development’ (1977a).

A 1981 report by the Brighton Council on the future of Gagebrook argued that its limited population of about 2500 people meant that the original aim to provide a range of services and facilities had not been achieved, and the Housing Department needed to increase the population to the minimum ‘viable’ level of 8000 (cited in Scandrett c. 1982, pp. 21-22, 49). Likewise, Annells and his colleagues (1981, p. 24) took the view the Department should continue with the development, stating that they

[accepted] the argument that having started at Gagebrook, the Division has an obligation to continue there until an acceptable minimum level of population has been reached. Quite clearly, the mistake of commencing at Gagebrook should not now be compounded by a hasty withdrawal leaving the existing inhabitants with no prospect of obtaining adequate community or commercial facilities.

It was ‘quite inappropriate’, they concluded, to respond to a legitimate concern for the cost of fringe developments by directly contributing, through ‘immediate abandonment’, to serious disadvantages for their existing residents (p. 28).

Leaving broadacres meant embracing infill, and therefore, meant tackling those qualities of infill sites that had originally made broadacre development the most attractive option. The Gagebrook report argued that the critique of broadacre development was ‘made in ignorance of the practicality of implementing an alternative strategy e.g. inner city redevelopment’ (Annells et al. 1981, p. 1). Despite ongoing demand for three bedroom detached houses, the Department currently had no land available in the inner city area appropriate for that kind of construction (p. 8). The market was small and, in 1981, relatively flat, and ‘the intrusion of a public sector presence even of this limited magnitude *could* have serious price consequences for the private purchaser’ (p. 16, emphasis in original). In the long-term, a return to broadacre development was inevitable, because inner-city sites would eventually be ‘exhausted’ (p. 20; see also Scandrett c. 1982, p. 26).

Annells and his team also felt the need to include in their report a copy of a working paper discussing the relative merits of inner versus outer development. This noted that although ‘[t]he combination of convenience and open space seems to be universally desirable’, it was often unobtainable in any area. The paper acknowledged claims in the literature that medium

density development generated greater community cohesion and activity through proximity; lent itself better to master-planning, avoiding ‘the visual monotony and ugliness’ of suburban development; delivered economies of scale; and limited urban sprawl. But, said the paper, the Housing Department’s own experience was that ‘feuds’ between neighbours over access to and behaviour in shared spaces were ‘characteristic problems’ in medium density developments. Community action groups, in the Department’s experience, formed not in medium-density areas but in the broadacres, to lobby for better services; tenants saw a unit as ‘only a transient step towards what they ultimately want’ — a suburban house with a garden (Annells et al. 1981, att. 2). But these arguments were no longer compelling and the earlier political constraints on change, such as the effect on yield of the smaller number of homes that could be constructed for the same cost in an infill program or the desire to avoid day labour retrenchment (see Tickner 1980c, p. 22), no longer had the same force.

Infill development was a key element of the housing policy platform of the new Liberal Government, elected in May 1982 (see p. 113 above). Specifically, the new Government was committed to ‘extend the element of choice available to Housing Division tenants, especially in relation to location of homes’ and ‘as far as possible, endeavour to get away from the broad[acre] type of development by smaller developments located to take maximum advantage of existing community services and infrastructure’ (Department of Housing and Construction 1982e). I do not however think the shift away from the broadacre can be explained solely by a change in government and therefore government policy. The move was evident from several years before the change of government, and many of the key decisions had already been made — an internal memo outlining the ‘principles’ that the Department would be adopting in order to implement the ‘new’ policies outlines what are in effect continuations of the old ones (1983c).

One of the interesting things about the broadacre critique as generally presented in the files prior to the early 1980s is that it is justified primarily on the basis of cost. This could be because the formal critiques which were advanced were made in financial contexts — the deliberations of the Expenditure Review Committee of 1978 and the ‘razor gang’ of 1981. But although there are examples of what might be referred to as the ‘broadacre pathology’ before 1981, it was not the orthodoxy it was to become afterwards. In particular, my reading of the discussion and arguments presented by Annells and his colleagues (1981) is that the principal policy objection to broadacre estates, at least at this point in time, was the cost of development, infrastructure and servicing — social problems were a more peripheral concern. The official brief for Annells’ team had been to devise a capital program which ensured ‘minimised’ activity at Bridgewater and Gagebrook and ‘maximum use’ of land in already developed areas (p. ii). But the study team seems to have understood the rationale for their

commission as being to withdraw from broadacres, rather than being to increase involvement in infill development (see pp. 1, 24-25, 28) — that is, infill development was simply the default alternative if outer area development was not acceptable, rather than being valuable in its own right. The team described the need to reduce broadacre development as a ‘political desire’ (p. 18).

### **The broadacre pathology**

The pathological critique of the broadacre, and thus the discursive object of the ‘failed’ broadacre, and the knowledge that this form of development was inherently and irredeemably flawed, is fully evident in the archive by June 1982. In a newspaper article, a copy of which is appended to an externally-produced planning report on Gagebrook, journalist Phillip Hobbs described ‘a typical day’ at the Bridgewater Community Health Centre. Hobbs began by observing that the cases presenting for medical attention included requests for prescriptions for the contraceptive pill, some for girls of ‘13 or 14. Some of those who did not join the queue last year visit the doctors this year — as mothers’. This was followed by a reference to an article in the *Women’s Weekly* the previous year (Brass 1981) which had ‘claimed Bridgewater had the highest incidence of cot death in the world’. The health centre staff reportedly thought ‘that Bridgewater is on the mend’, but the suburb’s ‘massive problems’ were still itemised: unemployment, a ‘high’ number of single parent households, poor public transport, lack of facilities. Both journalist and interviewees blamed the government for its error in creating the suburb ‘so far from Hobart’ and then ‘planting’ its residents there. The sexual behaviour of the area’s teenage girls was revisited at some length, although, the journalist commented, ‘[a]mazingly the young mothers seem to be coping with solo parenthood’. Solutions from the health centre staff were canvassed: better public transport services, more private enterprise and more ‘constructive TV programs’ modelling good behaviour. At the end of the article, Hobbs paid tribute to the doctors and other medical staff interviewed, saying that ‘[t]heir enthusiasm is contagious. Their Bridgewater is the real thing’ (reproduced in Scandrett c. 1982).

As this article suggests, by the 1980s, broadacres were understood as the unfortunate remnants of catastrophic policy mistakes by governments which should now know better. One assessment of the SMMPA’s (1976) Hobart Metropolitan Area Strategy Plan finds it necessary to clarify that the recommendations were produced at a time ‘when the decision to use broadacre development was considered to be appropriate’ (Scandrett c. 1982, p. 18). A tenant-produced information manual explains that broadacre development was widely used across the world because it was cheap and quick, but ‘was abandoned when it was realised that social problems were created, and that the overall cost was not necessarily cheaper. ... The lack of facilities, [and] discrimination against those in the areas remains a problem’ (Public



Tenants' Association c. 1986, p. 7). Local women contributing to an account of the history of Bridgewater, produced as part of a community development program, refer to the friendliness of the community and decry the snobbery of those who 'think they are better', but also present an account of Housing Department estates which depicts them as 'artificial' creations of a discredited policy, blighted by social problems and prejudice, and isolated by their fringe location, inadequate public transport and poverty (Williams et al. 1987, pp. 12, 21, 36-37).

Finally, the Director of Housing's last annual report, in 1989, provides a succinct statement of what had become the accepted policy narrative — of what was 'known' about the broadacre and the process which had produced it. The report stated that the Department first became involved in infill development in the mid-1970s, and that this form of development

began to emerge as the preferred option although the development of large broadacre subdivisions was continued in the seventies. The broadacre concept has now been rejected as an option for public housing provision. All housing developments are now built in established areas. Economically, the policy is preferable because it does not require the provision of extensive community infrastructure that goes with large outlying subdivisions. More importantly, there are distinct social advantages associated with infill housing. Little social stigma is involved with such developments, because people are living as individuals, not in easily identifiable and often isolated housing estates. In recent years, the Department has won praise for this policy and prizes for some of its developments (Sproule 1989, p. 7).

## **The Housing Department as a deliverer of services**

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### **The embrace of innovation**

From the early 1980s, the word 'innovative' appears regularly in the archive, as a descriptor, an object of discourse in its own right, and as a particular mode of 'doing' — that is, as a practice. But it is nonetheless a term undefined. An eclectic list of 'innovative' projects was on offer in the 1982 annual report: a number of research projects, including one examining whether the Department should become involved in the supply of boarding houses, joint ventures with local councils to build EPHs on council land, a 'demographic investigation' in Goodwood to examine the extent of under-occupancy in Departmental homes, the construction of 'moveable' units for use as 'granny flats' (none had yet been sold, '[d]espite the social advantages of the scheme'), a program to provide six houses in Launceston for the use of community-based youth groups, consideration of the Commonwealth's mortgage and rent relief program proposal and a series of active liaison committees with various community groups and government agencies (Sproule 1982, pp. 22-24). But there was no clear indication of which qualities in particular of any or all of these projects led to the 'innovative' label.

Other references provide some sense of the dimensions of the object of ‘innovation’. In 1981, the Department had been particularly unhappy about the failure of the new CSHA to include promised grant funding for ‘rental innovations’. In this context, the then Minister equated ‘innovation’ with state housing authorities ‘[moving] away from their historic role as house builders’ (Baldock c. 1981, p. 18). Similar sentiments are expressed in other documents, which suggest a desire on the part of the Department to make greater use, through cash subsidies and head-leasing, of the private rental market (for example Department of Housing and Construction 1981j; also 1981c). The desire to move away from building was linked to the Department’s conviction that

[i]n physical building terms, there appears to be nothing more that the Division can do to cope with the difficult demand situation... There is need for the Division to direct more of its resources towards research into the underlying causes of the current trends. ... This will involve the Division in a more positive role, in the capacity of a research and advisory body, in relation to the industry as a whole, and lead to other housing solutions to supplement dwelling construction (Lockhart 1980, p. 13).

Innovation was further linked with industry engagement a few years later: ‘[t]o help overcome the State’s housing problems it is necessary to be innovative and to involve and encourage the private sector’ (Sproule 1983, p. 10). To this end a Senior Level Group on Housing Matters was created to provide advice to the Minister. Its non-government membership was drawn from real estate agents, banks and building societies, business lobby groups and the Master Builders’ Association (p. 20).

‘Innovation’ also came through special purpose allocations attached to the CSHA. The 1984 CSHA had included the Crisis Accommodation Program and the Local Government and Community Housing Program. Both were oriented towards greater involvement in the provision and management of housing by community organisations and, in the case of the latter, also by local government and tenants (Sproule 1986a, p. 18). Their full introduction was slow, according to the 1986 annual report. The former was hampered by difficulties in finding ‘suitable’ properties to purchase, and the latter was so ‘innovative’ that there was considerable work involved in ‘developing ideas into acceptable proposals’ (1986b, p. 17). The ‘innovative’ rent and mortgage relief scheme had been trialled from October 1982. It began at a relatively small scale — in its first year, 1982-83, 596 households were assisted with their rent, of which 364 were still receiving assistance at 30 June (Sproule 1983, pp. 18-19). In 1983-84, however, 1340 households were assisted, with 638 still receiving assistance at the end of the year (1985, p. 16). The scheme was subsequently formalised as a special purpose program under the CSHA (1986b, p. 16).

The Department’s infill development projects were also identified with innovation. Their ‘innovative’ layouts offered more amenity, supported ‘flexibility in the development process’

and delivered 'greater variety in subdivision design', while still demonstrating 'sensitivity to the existing character of areas' (Sproule 1986b, pp. 13-14). Infill development meant a smaller building program because 'due to the dispersal of sites the work input per dwelling unit is considerably greater' and because of the 'emphasis' the Department put on 'aesthetic values... [and] quality and amenity' (1987, p. 18).

Thus, 'innovation' is equated with a turning away from history, with the development of 'thinking' through research rather than 'acting' by building, with closer engagement with the private and community sectors, and with a 'better' form of urban development. By 1988, some of these themes were coming together. In a section headed 'Public housing supply', the Director's annual report for that year discussed a number of emerging issues with infill policy. As predicted, undeveloped and developed land suitable for infill development was becoming more difficult to obtain and increasing in price. In addition, the need for '[p]roper integration' meant that the Department usually had to sell most of the lots it developed on to private builders. Earlier speculation had been that once land supplies started to become constricted, the Department would return to broadacre development, probably in Bridgewater and Gagebrook. However, the Director now indicated that it was

likely that an increasing fraction of additions will be achieved by buying dwellings from the private sector. Generally it is still cheaper in Tasmania to buy rather than build, so the purchase of dwellings is often more cost effective than building. Assimilation is also better. The building industry does not suffer either, since the majority of private vendors reinvest their sale proceeds in the construction of new dwellings (Sproule 1988, p. 13).

The year before, the Director had welcomed a legislative change which he said would provide the Housing Department with greater flexibility in relation to 'joint ventures with private enterprise and other innovations' (Sproule 1987, p. 8). This meant, he had explained, that the Department could now become involved in

high quality residential estates with lots for sale to clients of approved project builders or others. Appropriate planning controls will be imposed to ensure an integrated design for the whole streetscape, including landscaping. It is expected that a superior living environment will result. At the same time the speculative component of land development will be removed, ensuring a supply based on market demand (p. 17).

Such estates, however, like the proposed 425 hectare, 3700 dwelling Huntingfield Estate, would be designed and built entirely by the private sector, with the Department then buying back about 10% of them for its own use (pp. 18-19). Work began on Huntingfield in March 1988, with the official opening of the first 16 'exhibition' homes scheduled for September 1989. A marketing consultant and a building coordinator (the Master Builders' Association) were appointed and seventeen private builders formed the Huntingfield builders' group. The Director described Huntingfield as 'the flagship for future land development projects' (1989, p. 19).

## **The end of the Housing Department**

The practice and form of ‘innovation’ generated a particular type of knowledge about the Department. This knowledge repositioned the Department in relation to its product (public housing), altering that relationship from one of the Department as producer of housing to one of the Department as defender. Thus the Department operated a public relations program in areas where infill development was taking place, meeting with residents to ‘advise’ them on the Department’s intentions for their area. Associated with this ‘public relations’ work was the close attention to landscaping discussed in Chapter 4: the Director reported that as well as improving the gardens of spot-purchased homes, the Department ensured that ‘the appearance of new streets was considered at the design stage’ and developed more varied house designs to promote the anonymity of tenants (Sproule 1985, pp. 13-14; 1986a, pp. 14-15). Through public displays, tours of developments and official openings of major projects it sought to demonstrate its ‘high standard of housing’ and build ‘public awareness’ (1986a, p. 21). Crucially, however, defender in this case did not mean champion. The public awareness to be generated was that there was nothing to fear from public housing because it was the same as private housing. That is, public housing had become something that operated best when it operated invisibly and the construction of public housing was no longer a distinctive form of practice.

Linked to this last point, in his 1989 annual report, the Director made two announcements about the Department’s future which appear to date from either side of a state election. The first was a name change — the Department would now be referred to as Housing Tasmania, a name selected

to more accurately reflect the organisation’s role as principal provider of housing for the State Government and also its innovative and progressive marketing role. Housing Tasmania has, in recent years, become a major trading organisation responsible for significant land purchase and development projects as well as for home purchase and construction in Tasmania’ (Sproule 1989, p. 8).

The second announcement, however, was that the incoming government was to restructure the state service from 17 July 1989, and that Housing Tasmania would no longer operate as ‘a separate government department’. Its Development Division would become part of the Department of Construction; its Estates Division would be absorbed into the Department of Community Services. Its Services Division would ‘be shared between the two departments on a functional basis’ (p. 8). It was the Department’s Development Division which had responsibility for the ‘major trading’ functions identified above, but it is the Estates Division, responsible for managing the rental housing program and the estates, which was to carry the name ‘Housing Tasmania’ forward, and become the present day incarnation of the Department.

The Development Division no longer exists in any form. From the agency descriptor on the TAHO catalogue the Department of Construction's activities were directed primarily at 'public works' — that is, roads, bridges and public buildings. The Department of Construction was amalgamated with the Department of Roads and Transport in February 1993 (excepting a couple of minor functions which were transferred to the new Department of Environment and Land Management, itself an amalgamation of the Departments of Environment and Planning, and Parks, Wildlife and Heritage), but the resulting Department of Transport and Works only lasted until April 1995, when many of its functions were privatised and others were transferred to local government. I did not examine any files created by the Department of Construction but the item titles do not obviously indicate much, if any, focus on the construction of public housing.<sup>30</sup>

The break-up of the Housing Department was not, of course, purposefully and consciously designed as some form of discourse implementation program. But I would argue that such a break-up was plausible and achievable because of the discursive reconfiguration which had taken place. This chapter has described the way in which the Department's expert status as a builder of homes was modified and rewritten in relation to the knowledge of the failure of the broadacre estate. The Director of Housing's last report to Parliament as the head of the Housing Department emphasises that Department's increasing focus on client 'service', particularly around communication and the relationship between staff, community groups and clients (Sproule 1989, pp. 10, 26). This, and the Housing Tasmania's new role as an agency of the Department of Community Services, repositioned it as a provider of services, not a builder of homes. It now fitted into a corporate structure along with those agencies responsible for child welfare, emergency relief, homelessness programs, disability services, domestic violence services and prisons, probation and parole — all services that would be deployed in order to palliate the broadacre legacy of social dysfunction and hardship.

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<sup>30</sup> The TAHO catalogue is available from <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?search=1>>. The pages relevant to the future of the Development Division are, respectively, <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1&type=A&id=TA00909>>, <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1&type=A&id=TA01019>>, <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1&type=A&id=TA01018>>, and <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1&type=S&id=AD671>>. All pages accessed on 9 July 2015.

# CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

## Introduction

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The previous three chapters have explored the discursive practice of housing in Tasmania as manifested around three central points of policy intervention: the management of tenant behaviour; the administration of the contractual relationship between the Department and its tenants; and the production of houses. At a number of points in these chapters, I drew attention to variations within the discourse. However, in most cases, for reasons explained further below, these variations are not fundamental. They are best characterised as internal discursive adjustments rather than radical transformations. But between the discourse evident in the 1970s and earlier, and the discourse of the 1980s, there is, I argue, an identifiable discontinuity that is more significant. This discontinuity is constituted by a series of shifts in particular aspects of the discourse.

The use of the term ‘shift’ — and ‘discontinuity’ for that matter — implies that something is different, that something has changed, and this suggests that a shift can be identified and described in terms of ‘before’ and ‘after’ the change. My argument is that these ‘befores’ and ‘afters’ are respectively produced by two distinctive sets of discursive relations — that is, they have these sets of relations in common. The discontinuity which they define is the result of a reconfiguration in the discursive constellation, the effect of which was to fundamentally alter the relationships between the objects and subjects of housing discourse, allowing new ways of ‘knowing’ public housing to emerge.

In order to provide clarity, and a framework for what follows, I have summarised the ‘shifts’ I will be examining in Table 6.1 below.

**Table 6.1: Public housing discourse, before and after**

	<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
<b>1</b>	the Department is speaking subject in defining relationship between Department and ‘welfare’	the community sector is speaking subject in defining relationship between Department and ‘welfare’
<b>2</b>	rental policy: ‘economic rent’ in specific relation to value of the home	rental policy: ‘income-related rent’, no relation to value of the home
<b>3</b>	gardening, by tenants, to build pride in estates	landscaping, by Department, to camouflage public housing
<b>4</b>	subsidised rental housing: a necessary service and an obligation of government	subsidised rental housing: a service which should pay for itself

5	the Department is related primarily to the estate	the Department is related primarily to individual tenants
6	'the estate': source of pride, object of improvement and refinement	'the failed broadacre': damaged and damaging, problem to be managed and palliated

## 'Before' and 'after': six discursive shifts

### 1: The speaking subject

As discussed in Chapter 3, during the 1950s, 1960s and into the 1970s, the Department considered matters which did not directly affect occupants' care of their homes and properties or their integration into an orderly community — the wellbeing of children, for example, or incapacity due to alcoholism — as being outside its legitimate field of responsibility, and indeed outside the field of responsibility it could reasonably be expected to have by its political masters. Such externals, grouped approximately under the heading of 'social welfare', were assigned to other agencies of government, such as the Social Welfare Department.

This position remained consistent, even during the period the Director of Housing chaired the Social Environment Committee. Although the Department's welfare officers may have at times had a different view, the Department's senior officers made it clear on behalf of the Department that they resented the incursion by 'social welfare' matters into the operation of estates — meaning that they resented the physical manifestation of 'social welfare' problems, in the form of poorly supervised children or untended gardens, because such a manifestation made the underlying causes of the problems into the Department's problem. Despite political pressure for the Department to do more to manage the political problem of the 'problem' family, the Department was able to maintain this position, and have it accepted as the 'true' position.

There were a number of reasons for this. First, the Department's position was consistent with that of other government agencies, and so there was institutional reinforcement of the Department's claim. Secondly, there were other influential discourses in operation which attributed the behaviour of 'problem' families to various forms of pathology which required remedy through social welfare intervention. Within these overlapping discourses, the discursive object of the 'problem' family was defined in such a way as to assign them into the field of responsibility of the social work profession — estate management, as a discursive practice of the Department, was enacted upon occupants by non-professional subjects, not by social workers. Thirdly, in the discursive field of housing discourse, it was the Department

which assumed the status of speaking subject, and this gave authority and credibility to its effort to define its role in relation to 'welfare'.

However, the emerging community sector, or more precisely, those organisations concerned with homelessness, housing and emergency relief, promulgated a new form of discourse about 'problem' tenants and the appropriate distribution of responsibility for them amongst government agencies. This emergent sector explained itself according to, organised itself in relation to, and took on the role of speaking subject on behalf of, a new discursive object, 'unmet need'. The parameters of this object were defined by a self-evident failure of the Department — 'need' was only 'unmet' because the Department had failed to meet it — but also by a new discursive claim, that these were needs which the Department *should* be meeting, despite its own protestations that they were the responsibility of other agencies, but could not meet due to its innate bureaucratic characteristics — inflexibility, remoteness and incompetence.

Although 'unmet need' was defined consistently, its dimensions were elastic, because it was predicated on a different form of 'need' to that which had applied in earlier decades. Rather than need being defined externally, by the state of an individual's existing housing, it was now defined internally, by an individual's membership of a distinct social group. Because the number of social groups was indeterminate, 'unmet need' had the potential to expand indefinitely. As it expanded, the Department's existing client group of families and pensioners — categories created with an implicit assumption that they were exhaustive — was redefined so that rather than including 'everyone' it now included 'very few'.

Also incorporated into the boundaries of 'unmet need' was the 'problem family'. The Department had defined these households as excluded from its field of responsibility. The discourse of the community defined them and described them in such a way as to render problematic that exclusion. 'Problem' families were no longer primarily positioned in relation to their own pathology, but positioned in relation to another set of concepts, like 'special needs', 'crisis' and 'homeless' — characteristics shared by the other groups whose needs were 'unmet' and to whom the Department was supposed to be responsive.

As in earlier decades, in the discourse of the community the Department was detached from the discursive practice of 'welfare'. But in earlier decades, that detachment had been determined by the Department, and justified in discursive terms by a complex set of relations which positioned 'problem' families outside the Department's legitimate field of responsibility. In the discourse of the community, the detachment was formed differently; the Department's relationship to 'welfare' was premised upon its inability to do 'welfare' properly.



The discourse of the community sector colonised a discursive field previously defined solely by the Department. This colonisation was not the cause of the reconfiguration, but a symptom of it, and it was a development facilitated by the Department itself. That is, the Department established a series of processes by which the sector could have greater influence on Departmental decision-making — processes which in turn allowed the sector access to more sections of the discourse and made more available to community subjects the right and authority to speak.

## **2: Rent-setting**

The second discursive shift highlighted here is that which took place in relation to rents and rebates. In earlier decades, the discursive object of the ‘economic rent’ was explicitly related in the discourse to the materiality of the house. Because it was based on the historic cost of providing a home, the ‘economic rent’ gave priority to the costs of physically producing the property and maintaining and managing it. It established rent in specific relation to the value of the property as an object of labour. The variability of rents across different subdivisions further underpinned the discursive configuration of the relationship between each occupant and the material home in which they lived, endowing this relationship with qualities of permanency and specificity.

The existence of a rebate had always been problematic for this relationship, and it became even more so as, despite the imposition from within and without of a bounded role for the Department, the proportion of occupants who met earlier definitions of ‘welfare’ cases continued to grow. The introduction in the late 1980s of ‘income-related rents’ was done in part out of practical recognition that being on a rebate was now the normal situation of the majority of tenants. It also functioned as a policy commitment to the idea of public housing as provided specifically for ‘rebated’ tenants, because the structure of the income-related rent was such that tenants on ‘high’ incomes would be paying substantially more than the market rate and would therefore be expected to move on.

Discursively, the effect of the income related rent was to define rent no longer in relation to the materially-derived value of the property, but rather, in terms of a monetary exchange of fee for service. People paid a flat rate for the right to occupy (on a temporary basis) a Departmental home, and this rate was determined according to what ‘the market’ (meaning the tenant) would bear (meaning, could afford to pay). That individual income was the appropriate basis of establishing the ‘fee’ was built upon an assumption that income was the only relevant variable, and the lack of a market rent ‘cap’ on the rent payable was similarly premised on the assumption that people’s decision-making took place solely in relation to price

considerations, rather than any other matter. These assumptions require a discursive ordering system in which the public housing system is organised into an array of discrete individuals engaged in rational, financially-based transactions regarding a service (tenure in a property). This dislodged previous discursive arrangements which privileged permanent occupancy over temporary tenure, although the need to ‘encourage’ tenants to leave public housing through a financial penalty for staying suggests that the older conceptualisation still had influence on their behaviour.

### **3: Gardens, landscapes**

In the welfare officers’ reports from the 1960s, gardens are used to position and articulate public housing as a source and builder of pride. Individuals were encouraged to ‘improve’ their homes and gardens, and this drew upon a set of wider, socially embedded discursive practices associated with gardening and individual relationships with place. These practices and the self-government of the ‘keen’ gardening subject were oriented towards the attainment of an identifiable achievement: a beautiful estate. Thus one of the welfare officers could remark upon her ‘realization [*sic*] that the majority of Departmental homes have a standard equally as high as any private estate, and that the problem home is now very much in the minority, but more frequently brought to our notice’ (Housing Department 1965b).

However, the gardening itself was performed by tenants, albeit under direction from welfare officers, enabling and obliging individual tenants to contribute to the creation of the collective whole — the ‘showpiece’ estate. Tenants were positioned as significant contributors to the work of converting empty paddocks into thriving housing estates, and these housing estates were intended to be on public display as identifiable examples of the Department’s work. Tenants were also subjects produced by their surroundings — an impeccably-kept estate filled with well-maintained homes and thriving gardens would produce ‘good’ occupants.

By the 1980s, there is limited reference to the practice of the gardening subject. The form letter sent to new tenants in 1982 referred only tersely to gardening, informing tenants that it was ‘in your interest to improve your home and the surroundings. Advice is available on overcoming site problems and on matters of development and garden improvement. Please ask if you need this assistance’ (Department of Housing and Construction 1982n). Instead, the use of horticulture to provide an attractive environment had become a technical activity carried out by the Department’s ‘landscaping section’. The Director’s annual report notes the adoption of innovative technologies like hydromulching and the application of ‘anti-transpirant waxes’ to tree leaves to minimise transplant shock (Sproule 1989, p. 24).

As argued in Chapter 4, the intent of this practice of landscaping was to conceal and camouflage public housing properties by making them ‘blend in’ to private areas or look ‘just like’ private housing. It was a practice carried out primarily in infill developments rather than the existing broadacres. That is, in the discourse of this period, if public housing was to be on public display, this was problematised as stigmatising for occupants and provoking for neighbours. While ‘the estate’ was defined by its visibility and its overt connection to the Department, the infill developments which replaced the broadacres were defined by their invisibility and anonymity. In earlier decades, the Department had sought to respond to stigmatisation through estate improvement designed to build pride — that is, through making tenants more visible. Now, the Department responded to stigmatisation by using concealment to protect individual tenants from scrutiny. Rather than pride, the implication of concealment is shame.

#### **4: Rebates**

Despite the problematising effect of the rental rebate on the integrity of the ‘economic rent’, the Department in earlier decades acknowledged the importance of rebates as the only means of ensuring that a certain section of the population was able to obtain adequate housing. A significant part of the welfare officer’s working day was taken up with responding to rebate applications or investigating changes to tenants’ incomes that might affect their ongoing eligibility. Receipt of a rebate was determined according to a household’s income, but the involvement of welfare officers indicates some of the ways in which the relative subject-positions of the parties involved could affect the outcome. In August 1968, one officer reported that she had filled out ‘numerous’ rebate forms, as many tenants ‘have little idea how to answer such a form satisfactorily’ (Housing Department 1968f). Another noted that three widows on low incomes, all of whom ‘have families, who do not accept their responsibilities’, had recently forwarded rebate applications. She drew attention to one of these women in particular, describing her as having ‘had difficulty with finance for years since the death of her husband. This woman is scrupulously honest and terrified of falling into arrears. Her son is unemployed and no positions are available in the district at present. This woman deserves help’ (1968m).

In later decades, under pressure from Treasury, but also on its own initiative, the Department put to Cabinet an escalating series of submissions requesting approval for rent increases (see Housing Department 1974a, 1975, 1976a, 1977a; Department of Housing and Construction 1978d, 1978c, 1980, 1981i, 1982a, 1981d). These submissions expressed the Department’s repeated desire to contain its operating losses and reduce the magnitude of its calls upon consolidated revenue, and thereby suggest an underlying belief that rental housing must at least attempt to pay for itself. And the Director’s briefing notes to the officers charged with drafting

the Department's submission to the Legislative Council inquiry are also illuminating. The inquiry's fifth term of reference concerned the effectiveness of the rebate scheme; the Director wanted the submission to emphasise '[t]he fact that the Federal Government is responsible for income maintenance ... rebates are a State Government substitute for a Federal Government responsibility', the lack of comparable rebates in the private sector, and coverage of the pilot mortgage and rent relief program then underway (Department of Housing and Construction 1982l).

The shift that is evident here is in the status of the rebate. The rebate had always had a problematising effect, and had quite quickly become discursively positioned as a 'burden' for the Department. But despite the Department's ambivalence about the rebate from a financial perspective, it was nonetheless an integral component of the State Government's housing policy, without which significant groups in the community, including pensioners, would not have had access to housing. Specifically, the rebate was provided in explicit recognition that some households were not able to pay either economic or market rental levels in the prevailing housing market. Importantly, although contemporary analysts like Henderson (Commission of Inquiry into Poverty 1975) criticised the rebate because the subsidy was 'tied to the house', the rebate as constructed then (and now) was not tied to the *house*, but to the *tenure*. That is, tenants in receipt of rebates were not confined to particular, 'rebate' houses — they were in homes like all other occupants of public housing, and subject to a discursive practice which explicitly sought to normalise the status of public housing in relation to private forms of tenure. Thus the rebate functioned as an explicit leveller of the playing field. It placed poor households in a housing position equal to that of everyone else.

The position presented in the Department's submission to the Legislative Council inquiry does not convey these qualities. According to the submission:

Rental rebates are a form of income maintenance, as they have the effect of increasing income available to tenants by reducing their rental commitments. The cost of this subsidy is presently met from State Government resources. However, as a form of income maintenance, it should become a Federal Government responsibility. Since the introduction of rental rebates the numbers requiring rebate assistance, and the cost of that assistance to the State, have increased rapidly.

The submission followed these comments with a table familiar from the annual reports, showing the numbers of recipients by income source, the amount of money their rebates cost to the state each year, and the proportion of the tenancies (63%) involved. It noted the rent and mortgage relief pilot, with the comment that it demonstrated that 'the Federal Government has partly recognised its responsibilities in respect of financial assistance give [*sic*] to tenants in the private sector' and therefore only confirmed the Department's argument that public rebates should also be federally funded (Department of Housing and Construction c.

1982b, p. 13). In defining rebates as ‘income maintenance’ the implication was that rebates were, like unemployment benefits, pensions for single parents and sickness benefits, a form of social security. They ‘maintained’ people’s position in anticipation of the tenant acting to improve it. And, by implication, like other forms of social security in the Australian welfare state, their provision was made reluctantly and with due cognisance of the fact that they were funded by government from limited resources.

## **5: Estates, tenants**

In the 1970s and earlier, the key organising principle of the discursive formation of public housing policy was the relationship between the Department and the estate. The product of the Department’s broadacre construction program was not a series of individually-constituted buildings but a composite entity, a community, neighbourhood or subdivision, in which individuals happened to settle themselves. ‘The estate’ itself, as a discursive object, was constituted more by its houses, gardens and streetscapes than by the occupants who lived in it. The forms of subjectivity available to occupants were accessible to them through interaction with the material of the estate — ‘good’ occupants were those who maintained their homes and gardens to an appropriate standard, contributing to the overall appearance of the street, while ‘bad’ occupants allowed their homes and gardens to fall into disrepair, thus compromising the efforts of their neighbours. The practice of ‘improving’ home and garden also performed a rehabilitative function in relation to the individual occupant-subject, enabling some ‘bad’ tenants to convert their subject-status to that of ‘good’, but the effect was directed by an interventionist Department towards the greater good of the estate as a whole.

The production of the estates through the use of the day labour force is also significant. Even in its earliest form, day labour was always tacitly accepted as probably a more expensive option in pure cost terms compared to contract labour. But the tangible physical efficiencies available from this form of construction — the centralised assembly and prefabrication of components and the development of expertise in delivering a specific and customised product on site — were valued by those involved. The existence of the day labour force meant that housing production was understood as the outcome of a physical, material system involving the organised exertion of effort and skill, the conversion of materials into homes and the conversion of a landscape into an estate. It reinforced a conceptualisation of the Department’s product as ‘program’ rather than simply ‘house’. It is of course the case that day labour was not used in all regions of the state, but I think it is significant that it was used in the south, because this was the location of the Department’s head office and therefore the working location of the main decision-makers.

The relationship between the Department and its estates was conditioned by a series of processes designed to safeguard the estate by regulating the behaviour of its occupants. Some of these processes were procedural in nature — such as the clauses in lease and purchase agreements requiring occupants to maintain their gardens — but many were personal and idiosyncratic, structured around regular interactions between individual occupants and the Department's welfare officers, interactions which took place within the home of the occupant and were thus constructed as a form of physical 'inspection' of the space of the house and garden, and more particularly, of the relationship between the space and the subject.

The 'shift' which can be observed here is a change in the relative statuses of 'estate' and 'occupant' — the latter by the 1980s conflated almost entirely with 'tenant'. This repositioning, which took place in parallel to the increased prominence of the community sector subject (see Chapter 3) meant that the Department's principal discursive relationship was now with individual tenants. The delineation of the estate as a discursive object larger than the sum of its parts continued, but as discussed below, it now took on increasingly problematic and malevolent qualities.

If from the 1980s the relationship between the Department and its tenants was of elevated significance for the Department, it was also so for tenants. In earlier decades, where occupants of homes appeared in the discourse, they functioned primarily (though not exclusively) as objects rather than subjects. The corollary of the new way in which the Department and tenants were related in the discourse was that being 'a tenant' now required individuals to exercise increased responsibility for the form of their subjectivity. The Department drew away from direct intervention in the lives of individual tenants; from mid-1984, for example, it changed the process it used for assessing applications. Rather than an officer physically inspecting an applicant's current accommodation and forming a subjective judgement based on a specific and individual set of circumstances, allocation decisions were made within the Department's offices based on information provided by the tenant on a standardised form to justify their declared need for housing (Housing Department 1984d).

The individual makes itself a subject of its own actions using whatever is available to it in that specific setting (O'Farrell 2005, p. 113), and human action within discourse is always positional (Kendall & Wickham 1999, p. 53). In the extract provided in Chapter 3 from the Department's submission to the Legislative Council (see p. 78 above), it is tenants' own actions which determine their position as subjects of discourse: as socially acceptable or unacceptable, amenable to rehabilitation or exploiting the system. And although the Department was now principally related, in discursive terms, to its tenants rather than the collective estate, the nature of its interactions with those tenants was increasingly impersonal,

mediated by processes of tenancy administration which were depersonalised and standardised around notions of objectivity, fairness and efficiency.

## **6: Broadacres**

The estates in which the tenants lived were a source of pride for the Department in the post-war era. Such pride was expressed in material terms — descriptions in the annual reports and welfare officers' reports focus on the way estates looked in comparison to private areas and on the physical quality of what was provided to occupants. The Department's close involvement in designing and producing its own estates, particularly in the south, conditioned the 'estate' as an object of discourse. Specifically, the process established the 'estate' not as a bounded, static, 'finished' product, but as an object in motion, amenable to refinement and modification as required. Estates, should they prove unsatisfactory, could be improved. New and better designs, new and better services, new and better facilities — all could be deployed to make the next estate better than the previous one. In this sense, 'the estate' was a continuous entity rather than a series of individual places. That Rokeby would be 'better' than Risdon Vale negated the failings of Risdon Vale, rendering the latter inherently less problematic, even though little at Risdon Vale had changed. This perspective also reinforced the underlying discursive premise that people became subjects in specific relation to their physical surroundings. Estate 'improvement' involved the provision of concrete facilities — playgrounds, light industry, shops — and the presence of these items in sufficient quantity and appropriate distribution was seen to be all that was required for occupants to form a cohesive community.

But the discursive reconfiguration produced a new object of discourse which rendered pride and progressive improvement impossible. This object can be characterised as the 'failed broadacre'. The 'failed broadacre' drew upon existing discursive material — the stigmatisation of public housing estates, the lower incomes and social statuses of occupants and the lack of infrastructure in many existing estates — but amplified and reconfigured it in such a way that its implications were different.

The 'failed broadacre' was a pathological object. It was underpinned by a range of well-documented discursive claims: that broadacres created problems for the people who lived there, that disadvantage was contagious, that the broadacre was so fundamentally dysfunctional that it was beyond redemption and could only be palliated, and that broadacres were emblematic of the failings of large government agencies more broadly. It is an object familiar to any casual observer of contemporary Australian public housing policy and practice.

Discursively, the change here was from ‘estate improvement’ to ‘estate management’. The repudiation of and withdrawal from broadacre housing production in Tasmania left the existing estates in stasis, and this cemented their position as beyond redemption. The ‘failed broadacre’ was the abandoned estate. Palliation of their problems was discursively assigned to — and indeed, discursively claimed by — the ‘community’ sector, who would achieve this goal via the delivery of services. This has in more recent years been formalised by a program called ‘Better Housing Futures’, which has transferred management responsibility for the remaining broadacre estates to various community housing organisations around the state. As the name of the program suggests, the basis of the transfer is that community housing providers will do a ‘better’ job than the Government.

## Reconfiguration

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### Two sets of discursive relations

The six discursive shifts described above are shifts in the distribution of discursive material — objects, subjects and practices, and the knowledge they generate — but these shifts derive from differences in the underlying discursive relationships which determine this distribution. As discussed in Chapter 2, the ordering of these discursive relationships is produced and governed by ‘rules’. These rules function as a form of organisational logic, as a set of values which guide our interpretation of reality. They determine what we find credible and incredible, reasonable and unreasonable, possible and impossible.

The six versions of ‘before’ described above were, I argue, produced by one set of discursive relations. By this I mean that, in the post-war period, housing policy, as a body of knowledge and practice, was produced out of a discursive formation which related the objects and subjects of housing policy to each other in particular ways. These ways of relating were concerned with the role of ‘structure’, understood in particular, material terms. That is, within this discursive formation, the world was ordered as a series of relationships between people and things — building materials, gardens, homes. This is perhaps most obvious in the ‘before’ component of the fifth of the shifts described above — the primacy of the relationship between the Department and the ‘estate’, as opposed to the people living in it. But it is also evident in the others.

The Department’s authority and legitimacy as a speaking subject in defining its own relationship to welfare derived from its expertise as a housing provider, an expertise built upon practical experience; central to its claim that ‘social welfare’ was not its business was the physical disruption social welfare represented in relation to the tidy, refined object of the estate. The ‘economic rent’ related the amount of money paid by tenants to the value of the



property in which they lived, and in doing so it established them in direct relationship to their materiality of their homes. The provision of rebates to some tenants, which derived from the slum clearance movement of the 1940s, was undertaken as a systemic intervention designed to improve the physical quality of the housing which poor households could afford, and their removal from 'slums' into correctly-designed housing estates was all that was needed to turn them into citizens. The physical practice of gardening acted to remake tenant-subjects and to remake the estate as a whole. The pride in estates that was fostered in part by this practice was founded on their external appearance — the welfare officers' reports and the Director's annual reports to Parliament similarly equate the 'standard' of the estates to their visible aspect. Finally, the process of producing these estates and the process by which they could be improved and remade through the provision of better facilities and forms of design were centred upon their materiality — the physical form of the homes and neighbourhoods produced and the distribution of space and facilities within them.

In contrast, the discursive formation which produced the practices, materials and knowledge of the 1980s — the versions of 'after' examined above — was a system which centralised the individual as the core organising principle and therefore supported the claim that all individuals were entitled to equitable consideration by right. The Department's failure to carry out its responsibilities towards individual tenants with sufficient flexibility and responsiveness — in essence, its failure to respond to them as individuals — was the basis of the community sector's co-option of the right to define the Department's relationship to 'welfare'. The knowledge of the Department's failure existed in tension with the ever multiplying number of groups of individuals claiming to have an unmet 'need' for assistance, claims which rested on the assumption that the Department unfairly privileged some groups over others, rather than recognising the entitlement of every individual.

The introduction of income-related rents was aligned to this. Rather than rents being set in relation to the characteristics of the property in which the tenant lived, rents were now set according to a uniform method which related them directly to the income of the individual. Rather than having to pay an 'economic rent', with or without the assistance of a rebate, all tenants, even those who would not normally have received a rebate, were now paying an 'affordable' rent defined according to a formula which applied equally to everyone. That is, a plethora of rents now applied — but everyone was treated the same.

The move to infill development, supported by the practice of 'landscaping', was also oriented towards a more individualised conceptualisation of housing provision. Rather than delivering a standardised product, the Department now delivered a series of customised ones, tailored to the particular needs of the immediate environment in which they were set. Medium density

housing required the use of more ‘non-standard components’ and needed much more planning and design work (Sproule 1982, p. 17).

Meanwhile, the focus on financial sustainability represented by the Department’s efforts to recalibrate its budget represented a shift from a conceptualisation of public housing as the provision of decent housing for all (with rebates provided as a necessary bridge for some households) to a conceptualisation of public housing as shelter provided on discounted terms as a form of ‘income maintenance’ for households in need of social security. And the direct relationship between the Department and the estates shifted. The Department was no longer protecting and defending the estate against incursions by undesirable tenants; its principal relationship and obligation was to tenants themselves, both desirable and undesirable. This conceptualisation, like the changed attitude to day labour and the shift from estate improvement to estate management, drew on a set of ordering tools which arranged the world in terms of (mainly financial) incentives and motivations deployed to direct and channel behaviour, rather than ideas of creating a particular material environment or dispersal of material objects in order to produce behaviour.

The apparent outlier here is the ‘failed broadacre’, the new discursive object which emerged, from established discursive material, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The focus on broadacres’ lack of community services and facilities as contributing to their pathology appears to be more compatible with the environmental determinism from ‘before’ the reconfiguration than the individualism ‘after’ it. But I would argue that in fact, this lack was conceptualised in such a way as to fit within an individualised discursive framework. It was defined as a lack of amenity, and amenity or the lack of it does not exist in relation to a geographical location, but in relation to the experience of the individuals living there. Whether ‘amenity’ in a particular area is good or bad, that is, depends on the needs, wants and capacities of the individuals who live there. Broadacre estates in Tasmania, for example, have ample open space, a quality valorised in planning literature, but this is not taken as contributing to ‘amenity’ because it is not deemed to be what the people in these communities ‘need’ and because the use that can be made of it by some members of these communities, such as groups of young people, is constructed as socially undesirable.

### **Two ways of knowing public housing**

The effect of discourse is to produce knowledge, or rather, to designate particular knowledge as true or false. The failed broadacre, for example, is central to knowledge produced by the current formation of housing policy discourse — that government has made terrible mistakes in housing policy, that these mistakes are located within and inseparable from the innate characteristics of government, and that making things ‘right’ involves retreat from the policy

settings that created these errors. This knowledge historically situates the failure of public housing as the artefact of past decisions.

The ordering of public housing discourse in the 1970s and earlier (the period I have classified as ‘before’) produced a particular form of knowledge as to the purpose of public housing. According to this knowledge, public housing was there to provide people with permanent homes. The knowledge produced by the discursive formation which existed ‘after’ the reconfiguration of the late 1970s and early 1980s was that public housing was a form of service delivery. The nature of the service required — community-focussed, welfare-oriented, localised, flexible, ‘innovative’ — made it one which, consistent with the knowledge produced according to the ‘rules’ of a discourse organised around notions of individualism, was more appropriately delivered by community organisations than the monolith of government. And the purpose of service delivery is to act upon its subjects, to reform them and their lives, so that they can use their own agency to move forward (see Bullen 2010). ‘Good’ service delivery is impermanent for the individual — in theory service delivery remakes the subject so that they no longer need the service — and perennial, in that it manages the consequences of social structures rather than changing them.

The discursive reconfiguration that has occurred in housing policy is, as I noted in Chapter 1, usually characterised in the literature by reference to ‘neoliberalism’, or more descriptively, as ‘the death of the social’ (Rose 1996) and its replacement with ‘the economic’. As Brady (2014, p. 14) observes, neoliberalism is a powerful and popular ‘analytic category’, even though, as I noted earlier, she also contends that much of the research on neoliberalism, including that which examines it as a form of governmentality, fails to uncover not just ‘multiplicity and complexity’ but also the available ‘spaces for contestation and positive social change’. For Brady (p. 26) and others (see p. 20 above), ‘neoliberal’ governmentality operates as a fluid assemblage of power, rationalities and technologies, and these exist within, around and beside other forms of government.

In approaching this research, I certainly assumed — not without foundation in the literature — that neoliberalism, in some form or another, is what I would find. As Clarke (2007, p. 978) points out, there is ample empirical support for neoliberalism as an analytical concept and certainly my own empirical findings are consistent with the narrative of the emergence of neoliberal governmentality from the mid to late 1970s onwards (see Flanagan 2015a). However, at the end of my research, and in strict fidelity to the archival evidence as I found it, I do not think ‘neoliberalism’, even an analytically-nuanced neoliberalism as a governmental assemblage (Li 2014, p. 37), or an ‘authentic historical’ neoliberalism (Williams, cited in Clarke 2007, p. 980), is an accurate label. I found, as I describe above, a shift in the organising

logic of the discursive formation — a change in the rationality, to use the terminology of governmentality — from structure to the individual, and this is subtly different.

However, it is important to note that although this finding offers something different to that contained in the literature, it is not inconsistent with it. The centrality to neoliberal governmentality of the subject as self-regulating, entrepreneurial, economically-constituted individual is well-established in the literature (see Bevir 2013, p. 159; Clarke 2007, pp. 976-977; Gupta & Sharma 2006, pp. 284-285). But more particularly, Li's (2014) account, compatible with the other literature I have outlined, of the contrast between liberalism and neo-liberalism emphasises the changed nature of the required knowledge necessary to exert effective government over populations. According to Li (pp. 36-37), liberalism was organised around a rationality which understood society as a pre-existing 'natural system' and the task of government as '[enframing] social processes in mechanisms of security so they can take their natural course, adjusted only slightly'. To do this, the state required knowledge of society, both a general knowledge of what constituted a 'normal' society and a more specific knowledge in relation to the incidence of deviancy from that norm. This knowledge was obtained, as Li puts it, through the process of "making it up," by devising categories, collecting statistics in relation to those categories, measuring and comparing'. By contrast, neoliberalism is organised around 'homo economicus', the rational, calculating, choosing individual, government of whom must be arranged so that those rational, calculating choices are congruent with what is required in 'the general interest'. The knowledge that is required by a governmental assemblage of this kind is knowledge of human decision-making.

While I am careful not to stretch the point, Li (pp. 36-37) is describing a shift from 'knowing' the structure of society, as a schema of population groups defined against norms, to 'knowing' the motivations of individual humans, understood primarily through techniques of calculation and quantification. This is not identical to the argument I have outlined above but there is a degree of consistency. The spaces opened up between my archaeological account and that which is put forward in the literature on neoliberal governmentality are spaces that can, should and, I hope, will be filled by future research.

## **The thesis restated**

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### **The argument**

In this thesis I have argued for the existence of a major discursive discontinuity in the discourse of Tasmanian public housing policy. This discontinuity can be located, with some reservations, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. It took the form of six shifts in discursive relations which were expressed as changes in the discursive practice of the Tasmanian Housing Department.

Their effect was to change what was known about public housing. Where once, public housing was known to be directed towards the provision of permanent homes and stable communities in which ordinary Tasmanian families would live their lives, raise their families, and build their futures, public housing is now known to be a welfare measure for the very poor and the very dysfunctional, provided as part of a suite of rehabilitative services designed to reformulate the subjectivity of tenants so that they will no longer need to be tenants.

As discussed in Chapter 1, that there has been a change in the way in which public housing policy is formulated and practiced has long been acknowledged in the literature, and has generally been attributed to the influence of neoliberalism on economic and political thinking from the 1970s onwards. In this thesis I have, by describing and accounting for the discontinuity as it exists at the local level in Tasmanian history, provided a much more particular, detailed and nuanced account. I have argued that it is not ‘neoliberalism’ that has caused the change, but a more fundamental reconfiguration in the organising principle of discourse. The shift that has taken place is a shift from ‘structure’ to ‘agency’, from a mode of ordering which relates subjects to the materiality of their surroundings to a mode of ordering which centres everything upon the individual. The transformation in the discursive field occupied by public housing has taken the form that it has, and has been expressed through practice in the way that it has, because of the nature of this reconfiguration.

### **The contribution**

My argument is founded upon a reading and an application of Foucauldian archaeology. There is a tendency in the literature to see Foucauldian archaeology as merely the precursor to his more sophisticated genealogy. In adopting an archaeological methodology, I have perhaps not been able to provide as detailed an account of power and contestation that might have been possible had I adopted a different ‘point of attack’ (O’Farrell 2005, p. 69). But I have provided a highly specific and particular account of what happened in one small place in the world, but shown how events in this one small place share discursive space with much wider policy currents. If we accept the premise that the specificity and particularity identified here applies in any instance of policy implementation, in any where and when, then this study demonstrates the complexity of the discursive field that perpetuates all that is ‘taken for granted’. And in demonstrating that an explicitly archaeological method can be applied fruitfully to fragmentary archival evidence, and in laying out an exemplar of how detail, incident and minutiae that high level analyses inevitably overlook for the sake of cogency can be used to unpick that complexity and problematise what is taken for granted, I have shown the applicability of archaeology to questions usually tackled through the lens of genealogical governmentality, and thus opened up new possibilities for the empirical and theoretical investigation of housing phenomena.

## AFTERWORD: WHAT DOES IT MATTER?

The effect of the discursive shifts described in Chapter 6 on the public housing system in Tasmania is threefold. First, ‘the Department’ no longer has control of the discourse. Its role as speaking subject has been ceded to the community sector in relation to its social role and its right to speak in relation to its economic role has been overridden by the set of discursive practices we can label ‘neoliberalism’, practices which are regulated by other systems of control and other speaking subjects. Secondly, the state housing authority in Tasmania no longer asserts its claim to be providing ‘ordinary’ Tasmanians with ‘ordinary’ but, importantly, permanent homes. It has accepted its role as the provider of ‘public housing’, meaning rental housing, for those most in need, for the duration of their need. At worst, this is public housing as a last resort; at best, it is public housing as compensation for those who cannot have anything better. The housing authority’s acceptance of this role is such that it even defends its subordinate position against those who seek to advocate on its behalf. Thirdly, the Department’s legacy — the estates it built, the ‘purchase contract tenants’ it invested in — is now understood as something to be ashamed of, not as something to take pride in. And the result of all of this, for tenants, is the ‘malign effects of stigma’ (Warr 2005).

Perversely, the origins of the public housing system can be located within an application of classical economics. The Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement was a response to market failure — a response to the fact ‘that private enterprise, the world over, has not adequately and hygienically housed the low-income group’ (Commonwealth Housing Commission 1944, p. 24). This market failure has not gone away and it will not under the new policy approach. The community housing organisations being positioned to replace the direct provision of subsidised housing by government are not private enterprises, but in order to be ‘viable’ and ‘sustainable’ they are required to behave, in all respects but in relation to the distribution of their profits, as if they are (see Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2009).

The starting point for this thesis was the ‘taken-for-granted’ knowledge of public housing’s failure — why was public housing so despised and rejected by those who delivered it and funded it? It was this attitude, I thought, which had inspired the current direction of policy — towards stock transfer, ‘growth providers’ and government withdrawal — despite the lack of an evidence base to support it. Unpicking the process by which this attitude came to be might provide material with which to build a case for a different approach to policy which would have a greater chance of success. However, I have come to rest in a slightly different, though

related, position. My intention is no longer to propose an alternative program for action. Rather, it is to expose the contingent nature of our knowledge about the current one. But what then? Foucault (1991 [1980], pp. 84-85) was once asked why, instead of providing specific instructions to his readers about what they were to do about the problems he identified, he simply paralysed them by revealing to them the full extent of their own complicity within them. He replied that his aim was ‘precisely to bring it about that they “no longer know what to do”’. He wanted to make taken-for-granted doings ‘problematic, difficult, dangerous’. The discomfort this generated was essential to the transformation of injustice — change, he argued, would only come ‘when critique has been played out in the real’.

I ‘no longer know what to do’ — but I remain convinced that what we should do is something other than what we are doing now. The discursive complexity which has produced the practice of public housing policy in Australia and which is demonstrated here from my reading of the archive highlights the challenges of such a critique. It also opens up space within which it might take place. In such space, it is possible to find other answers if we are willing to look for them.

# APPENDIX

**Table A: Summary description of key archival and Tasmaniana source material used in the thesis**

Item		Summary of contents	Description
AA563/1/126	34/19 35 Day Labour	Office of the Minister for Industrial Relations and Manpower Planning file relating to the management of the day labour force surplus, 1981	Various correspondence and briefing papers, some not related to housing, concerning options for the redeployment of surplus day labour
AB271/1/1	Tenancy and Allotment of Home Files (SRD)	Departmental file containing a representation of tenancy files dating from the 1970s and 1980s	Eight files containing assorted documents, mainly administrative, relating to the management of these tenancies
AB279/1/38	Cabinet Submissions – Labor Government: Cabinet Submissions nos 1321-1345	Cabinet Office file including documents relating to Cabinet Submission no. 1334 (Housing Subdivisions – Proposed Review of Existing Policy), 1978	Cabinet papers relating to Treasury's submission calling for a review of the State Government's broadacre policy, including a report provided to the Cabinet Office on progress implementing Cabinet's decision
AB279/1/99	Cabinet Submissions – Labor Government: Cabinet Submissions nos 2660-2661	Cabinet Office file containing some files and documents relating to Cabinet Submission no. 2661 (the 'razor gang' submission), 1981	Cabinet papers and associated documents relating to the razor gang process, including documents relating to the public relations strategy adopted in relation to the razor gang cuts (part 1 of 2)
AB279/1/100	Cabinet Submissions – Labor Government: Cabinet Submission no. 2661	Cabinet Office archive box containing most of the files and documents relating to Cabinet Submission no. 2661 (the 'razor gang' submission), 1981	Cabinet papers relating to the razor gang process and proposals and Cabinet decisions made as a result, including copies of documentation for proposals related to Housing Department (part 2 of 2)



AB279/1/104	Cabinet Submissions – Labor Government: Cabinet Submissions nos 2705-2715	Cabinet Office file containing documents relating to Cabinet Submission no. 2705 (Day Labour Review), 1981	Cabinet papers and other Cabinet Office correspondence and documents relating to the Day Labour Review Cabinet Sub-Committee (established arising from the Engel review of the day labour force); also contains documents supplied by the Victorian Parliamentary Library relating to significant reforms to the public housing system being undertaken in Victoria
AB939/1/1	Schedule of Recommendations on the Allotment of Houses by the Selection Committee	Allotment schedules (lists of successful applicants), 1950s	Forms, dating from January 1951 to December 1957, detailing the names, family situation and current housing conditions of successful applicants for government housing assistance
AB943/1/5	Housing Improvement Act	Agricultural Bank file relating to the <i>Homes Act</i> , late 1940s and early 1950s	Documents, including draft legislation, relating to various amendments made to the <i>Homes Act</i> between 1948 and 1953, including material relating to Tasmania's withdrawal from the CSHA
AD650/1/406	FA4769-GAGE/01-Gagebrook Subdivision	Two-part Departmental file on the development of the Gagebrook subdivision, mid to late 1970s	Documents, including plans, maps and invoices, relating to the planning, development and construction of the Gagebrook subdivision
AD650/1/407	FA4769-GAGE/01-Gagebrook Subdivision		
AD651/2/1	Housing Division Day Labour Workforce – Cabinet Submission no. 80, 504 – Cabinet Decision no. 109, 498	Departmental file relating to Cabinet Submissions nos 80 and 504 (Day Labour Workforce), 1982	Documents relating to a series of Cabinet submissions made by the Department seeking policy direction on the future of the day labour force: includes documents relating to the Department's planning for a reduction in the labour force down to a 'base' figure
AD652/1/1	CAB-02-Cabinet Decisions and Submissions	Two-part Departmental file relating to Cabinet submissions made between 1971 and 1982	Documents, including copies of draft and final submissions, correspondence and formal records of decisions taken: the early parts of the first file contain limited detail due to Cabinet submissions being undocumented up until the mid-1970s
AD652/1/2	CAB-02-/1 Part 2 – Cabinet Decisions and Submissions		

AD652/1/54	HOU/207-Housing-Tasmanian Policy Package	Departmental file relating to implementation of the Gray Liberal Government's policy package on housing, 1980s	Documents including progress reports to Cabinet on implementation of the Government's policy package on housing originally taken to the 1982 election: includes the original policy platform and internal Departmental reaction to it
AD652/1/70	HOU/209-Housing-Legislative Council Select Committee	Department file on the Legislative Council Select Committee on State Housing, 1980s	Documents relating to the Housing Department's interaction with the Legislative Council Select Committee on State Housing, which was appointed in August 1982 and reported in 1985: correspondence, material relating to the preparation of the Department's submission and subsequent evidence, copies of the submission and other material provided to the Committee
AD652/2/4	Day Labour — Reorganisation of Work Force — File no. 57/1	Departmental file relating to the management of the reduction in the day labour service, 1980s	Documents relating to the Department's management of the day labour force in the early 1980s, including its management of the redeployment of the day labour surplus, a subsequent program of voluntary redundancies and low morale in the workforce following its reorganisation
AD668/1/43	FA4041-SOC/01-Social Environment Committee-Housing of Eviction and Problem Cases	Department file relating to the Social Environment Committee, 1960s and early 1970s	Documents relating to the Department's involvement in the Social Environment Committee (established 1972) as well as earlier efforts to find an interdepartmental solution to problems with 'problem' families
AD668/1/45	FA4383-HOU/156-Housing Development-Hobart Area-Location Policy	Departmental file relating to the activities of the Special Housing Advisory Committee, 1969	Documents relating to the activities of the Special Housing Advisory Committee and to the broader question of where the Department should base its construction activities following completion of the Mornington estate: correspondence, minutes, reports and handwritten file notes
AD668/1/56	FA4807-PLA/12-Planning & Budget Committee	Departmental file relating to the internal Planning and Budget Committee, late 1970s	Minutes and meeting papers of the Planning and Budget Committee, which had responsibility for measuring performance against budget: relates primarily to the Department's financial position between 1977 and 1981

AD668/1/57	FA4810-POV/01-Poverty-Commonwealth Commission of Enquiry	Departmental file relating to the Henderson Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, 1970s	Small number of documents relating to the Department's correspondence with the Commission
AD668/1/65	FA4834-SEM/01-Seminars and Conferences-Low Income Group-Housing Needs	Departmental file relating to Director of Housing's attendance at a number of national conferences, 1972	Copies of papers presented at conferences (including one by the Director himself) and associated material
AD668/1/89	FA655-810-Slum Abolition	Agricultural Bank file relating to slum abolition, 1940s	Contents relate mainly to the Agricultural Bank's dealings with the Slum Abolition League but includes other background material on slums in Tasmania
AD668/1/97	FA1731-Parliamentary Labour Party-Sub-Committee on Housing	Departmental file and bound volume containing Department's response to a questions from the Parliamentary Labor Party's Subcommittee on Housing, early 1960s	Various documents including copies of the original requests for information, copies of successive drafts of the Department's response to the questions and copies of information obtained from other state housing authorities, as well as a bound volume containing the Department's formal response to the subcommittee
AD668/1/106	FA2311-WELF/01-Welfare Activities	Welfare officers' reports from each region, 1960s	Copies of the monthly reports made by the Department's welfare officers in each region, dating from January 1965 to November 1968: reports followed no consistent format but provide much detailed information about day-to-day welfare work on the estates
AD668/1/137	FA4458-WELF/01-Welfare Activities-General	Department file relating to welfare activities, 1970s	Documents dating from the 1970s and related to the Department's welfare officers and welfare programs: varied contents related mainly to the relationship between the welfare officers and the rest of the Department
AD668/1/145	FA4804-PLA/03-Planning & Construction-Radburn System	Departmental file relating to the introduction of the Radburn system of subdivision in the Department's estate of Rokeby, 1970s	Documents relating to the decision to adopt the Radburn design, its introduction at Rokeby and the public reaction to it: includes material relating to estate management issues at Rokeby Radburn and a retrospective account (c. 1977) of the Department's experience in introducing it

AF181/1/3	Minutes of Meetings of Cabinet – Labor Government (25 January 1977-5 May 1982)	Minutes of Cabinet meetings, 1977-1982	Volume containing minutes of Cabinet meetings between January 1977 and May 1982: a record of decisions taken but no details of other discussions
NS1303/1/1	Correspondence		
NS1303/1/2	Miscellaneous Correspondence and Associated Papers of Slum Abolition League	Three files containing papers and correspondence of the Slum Abolition League, 1940s	Contents consist of unsorted miscellaneous correspondence, draft reports, press clippings, notes and League publicity material
NS1303/1/3	Miscellaneous Papers c. 1940-c. 1944		
NS1303/1/5	Minutes of Meetings	Minutes of Slum Abolition League meetings	A single exercise book containing handwritten minutes for League meetings: minimal detail included
TRE5/1/1602	Correspondence re the Advantages or Otherwise of Day Labour	Treasury file relating to exchange of correspondence between member of the Victorian Parliament and the Treasurer regarding the use of day labour in Tasmania, 1924	Copies of original request, information provided to Treasury by the Department of Public Works, and Treasury's response to the Victorian member
Tasmaniana collection	Copies of papers presented to seminars organised by the Tasmanian Housing Department, 1970s	Copies of papers delivered by local and interstate speakers to a series of seminars held annually by the Housing Department around particular themes between 1972 and 1975 inclusive (n.b. copies of the 1972 seminar papers are not available): provides information on the views of various stakeholders and commentators during this period	
	Copies of research reports produced by the Southern Metropolitan Planning Authority in 1980 and 1981	Series of reports on housing issues in the southern metropolitan region produced by researchers working for the Southern Metropolitan Planning Authority; program was defunded prior to a final report being issued: provides original statistical information, detailed information on the Tasmanian housing and homelessness sector and information about how the Department and other government and non-government agencies regarded the housing situation in Tasmania c. 1980	
	<i>The Journals and Printed Papers of the Parliament of Tasmania</i>	Contains copies of all reports and papers presented to Parliament, including the annual reports of the Director of Housing and the reports of Parliamentary committees	

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